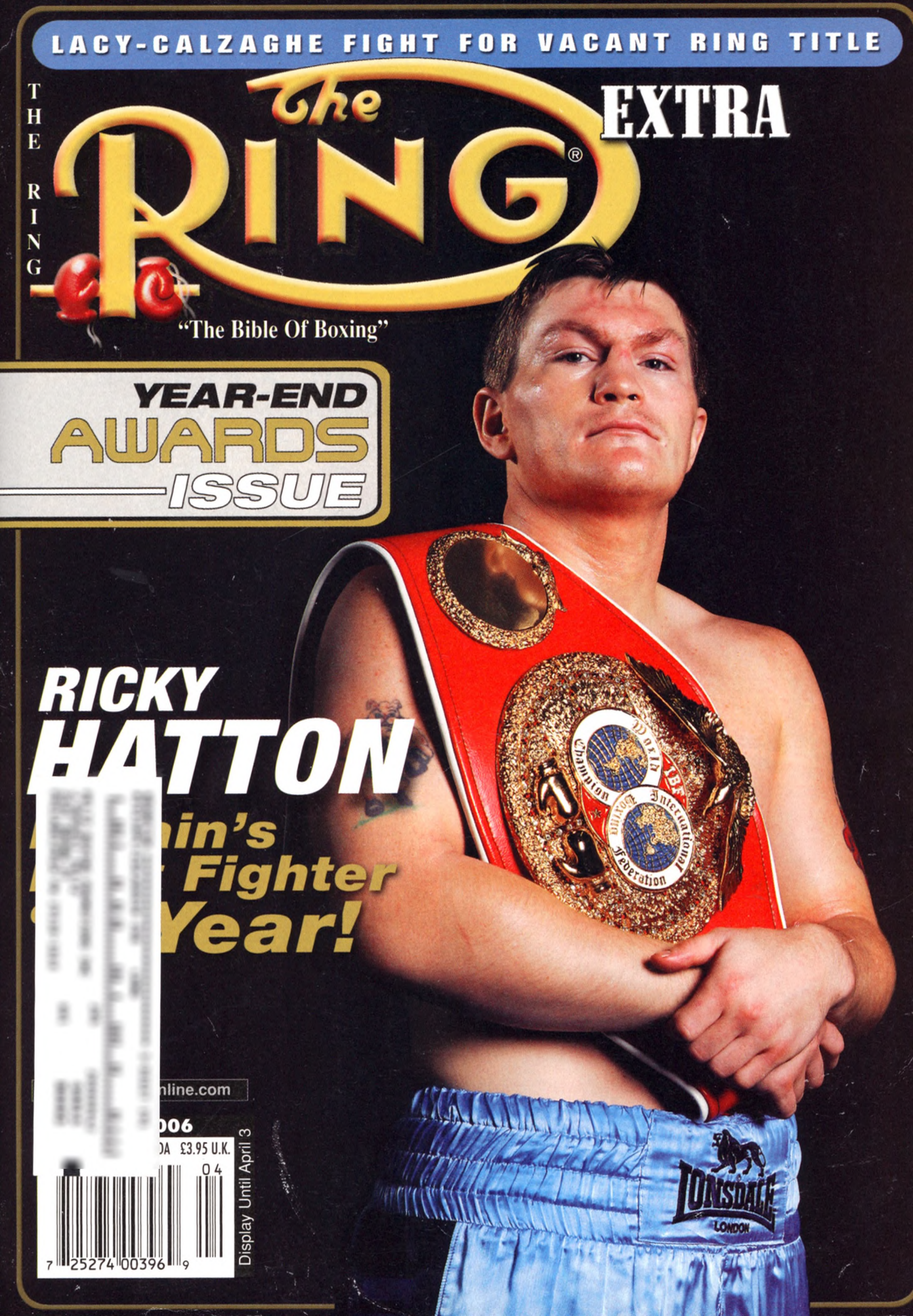
LACY-CALZAGHE FIGHT FOR VACANT RING TITLE

THE RING

The RING® EXTRA

"The Bible Of Boxing"

YEAR-END AWARDS ISSUE



RICKY HATTON

...hain's ... Fighter ... Year!

...nline.com

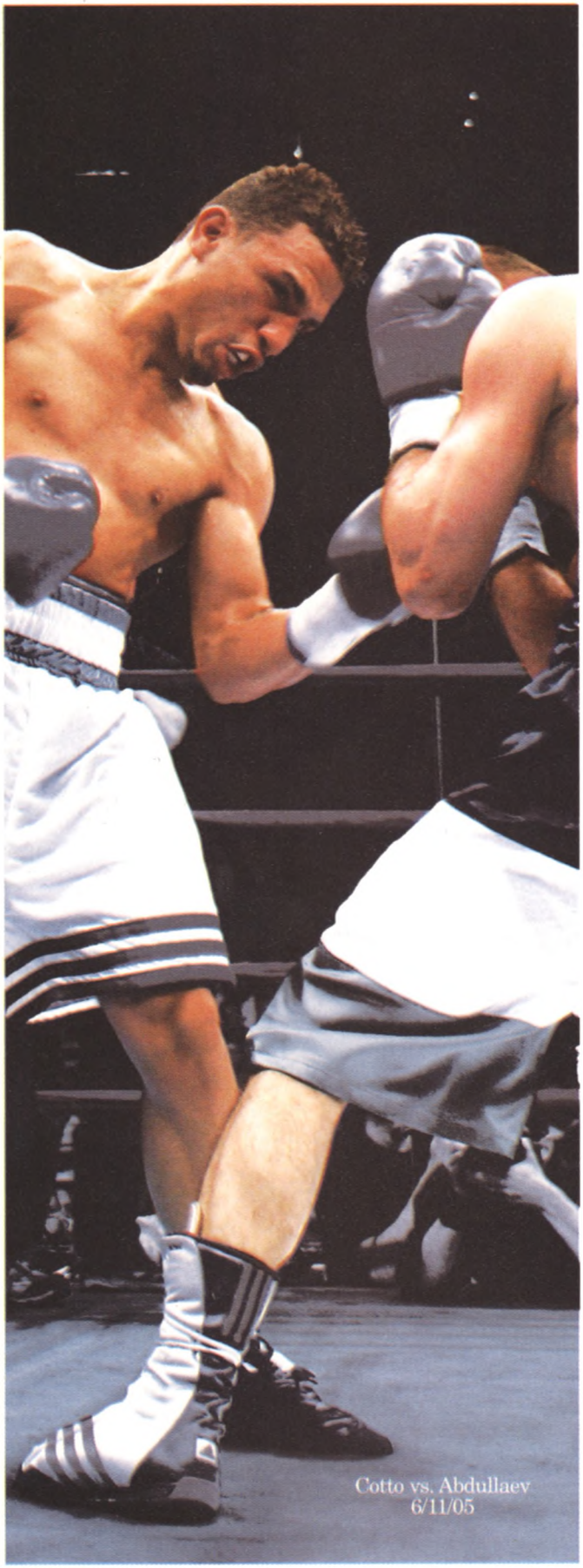
...006

...DA £3.95 U.K.

04

7 25274 00396 9

Display Until April 3

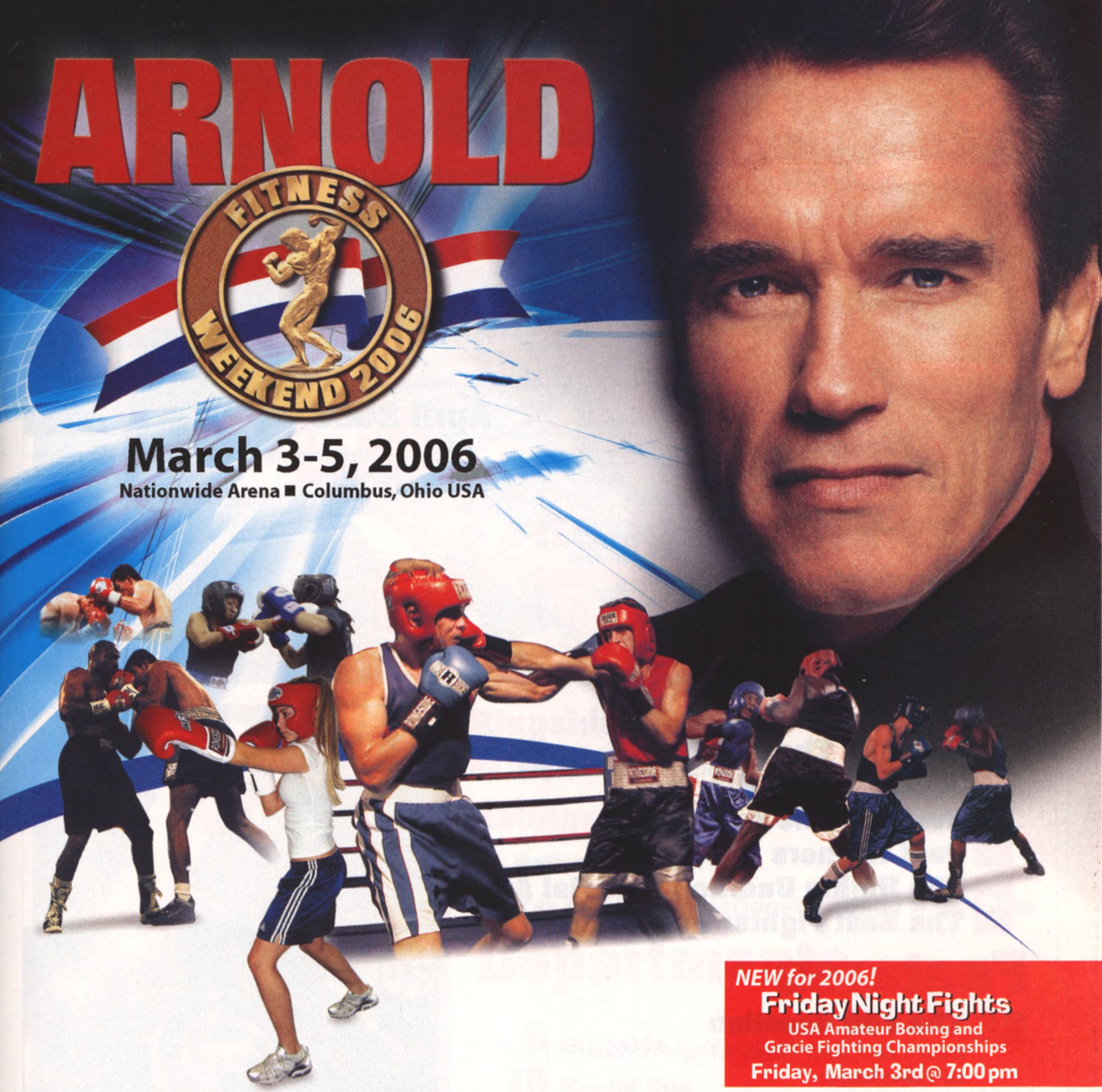


HBO Boxing After Dark®

Hard-Hitting.

HBO SPORTS

Subscribe online at HBO.com AOL Keyword: HBO ©2005 Home Box Office, Inc. All rights reserved. ® Service marks of Home Box Office, Inc.



NEW for 2006!
Friday Night Fights
USA Amateur Boxing and
Gracie Fighting Championships
Friday, March 3rd @ 7:00 pm

First Annual

Arnold USA Boxing Invitational Championships

Showcasing novice and open amateur boxing competitors.

Men, women and youth; age and weight divisions. Event Chair: Tokey Hill; phone 614-796-1115, fax 614-796-1119 or email info@arnoldboxing.com. For more information, competition schedules, workshops, and on-line registration visit **www.arnoldboxing.com**

SPORTS COMBAT INTERNATIONAL

RINGSIDE WWW.RINGSIDE.COM

WEEKEND INFORMATION: **www.arnoldsportsfestival.com** www.ArnoldClassic.com www.arnoldexpo.com

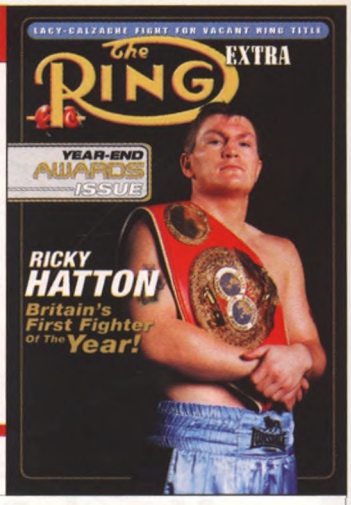
TICKET INFORMATION: www.ticketmaster.com or call 614-431-3600

© CLASSIC PRODUCTIONS INC

Contents

The RING Extra

April 2006



Ricky Hatton by **Mark Robins/Punch Promotions**

Cover Design by **Olivia Wierzbicki**

Special Year-End Section

33 Introduction
34 Fighter Of The Year
40 Fight Of The Year
42 Round Of The Year
44 Knockout Of The Year
46 Upset Of The Year
48 Comeback Of The Year
50 Event Of The Year
52 Past Winners
54 The Highly Unofficial Official Awards
56 The Best Fighter Poll

Features

26 **The $50 Question**
Is Jermain Taylor Really A Pay-Per-View Fighter?
By David Mayo

60 **Joe Calzaghe vs. Jeff Lacy**
Is This Another Classic In The Making?
By Don Stewart

66 **Taylor-Wright Bout In Doubt**
Was Soliman The Wrong Choice For Winky?
By Ted Bodenrader

72 **Junior Featherweight Champion Israel Vazquez**
Will His Paycheck Ever Match His Ability?
By Ivan Goldman

78 **Talent, Heart, And Desire**
Zsolt Erdei's A Rare Bird Among Light Heavys
By Brian Doogan

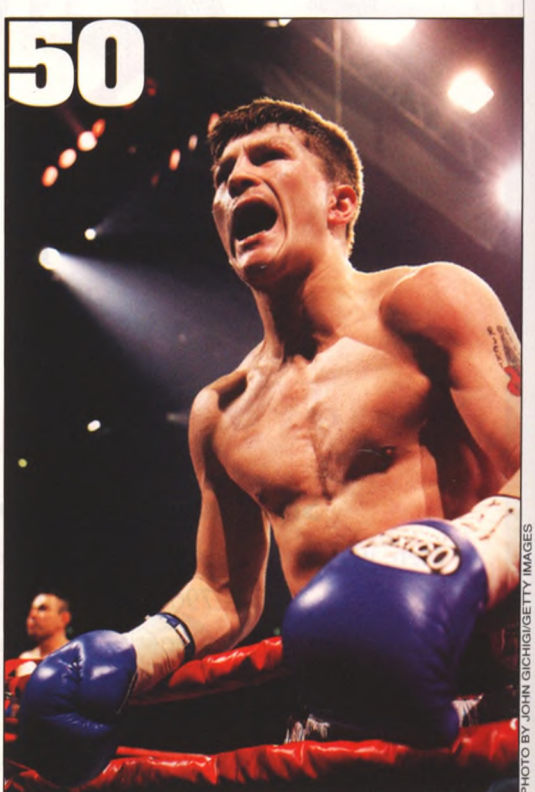


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

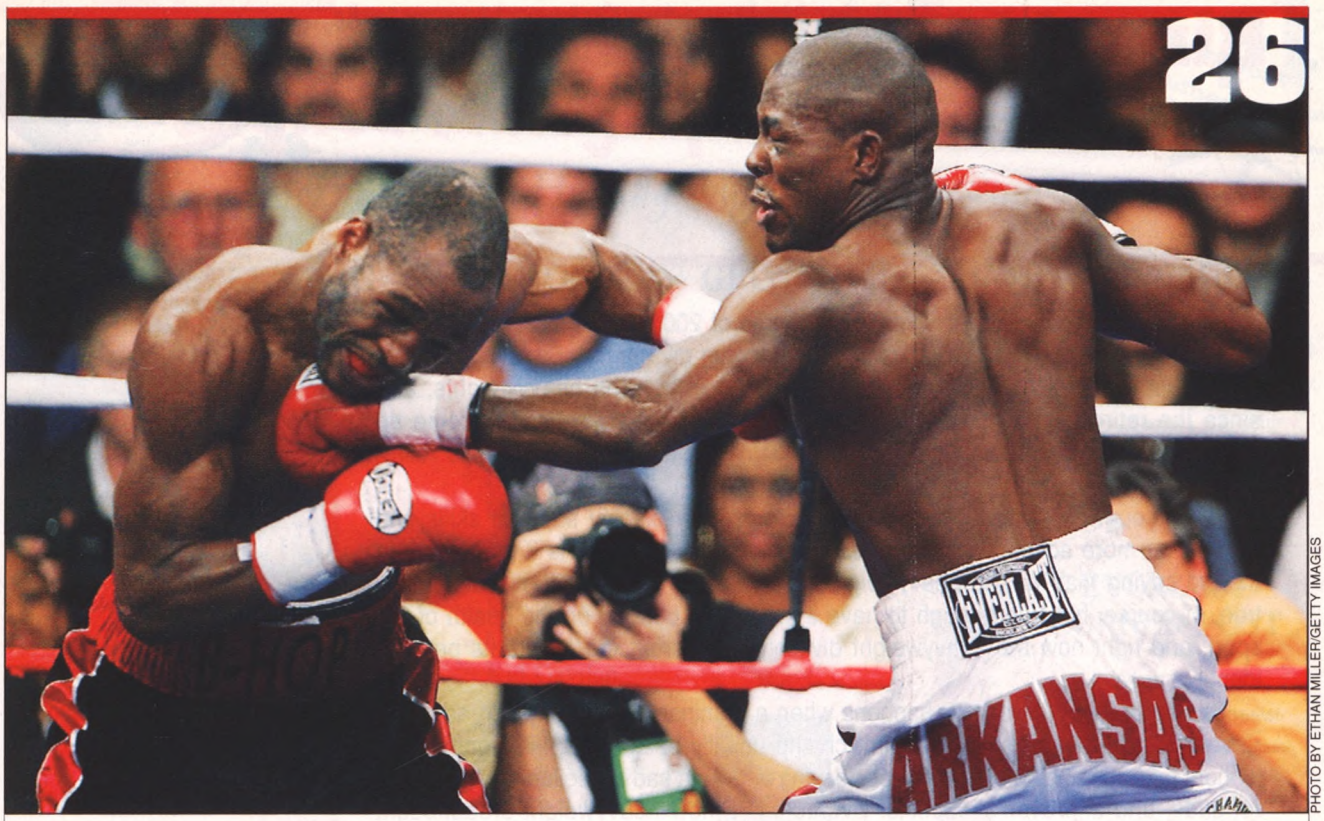


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

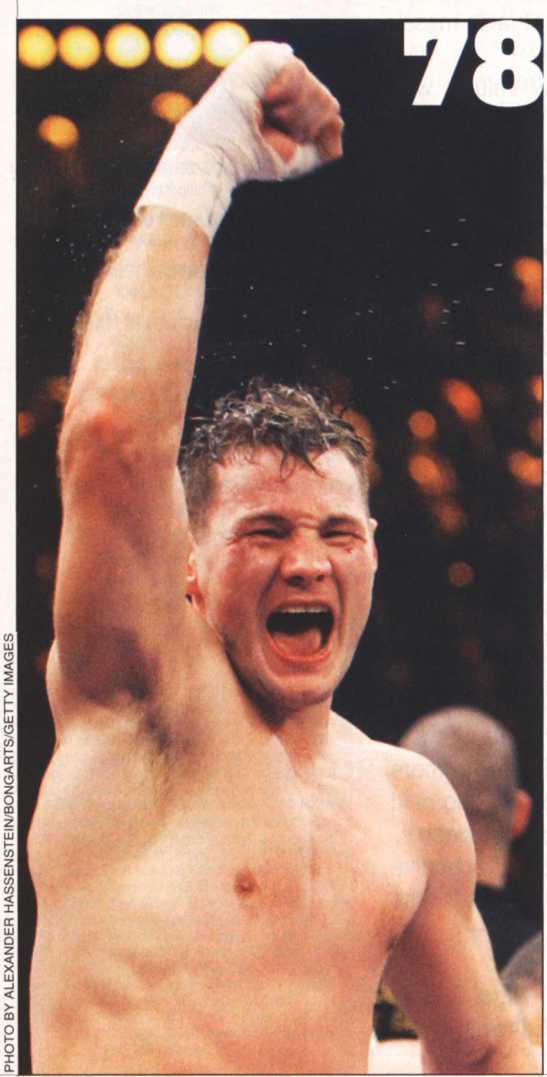


PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Ringside Reports

86 Fighter Of The Month & Ringside Reports

Ratings

13 Ratings Analysis

14 The Ring's International Ratings & Records

Departments

6 Ringside *by Nigel Collins*

10 Round One

16 Ryan Out Loud *by Jeff Ryan*

18 Digging Deep *by Ivan Goldman*

22 Camera Clicks

24 New Faces: Nonito Donaire *by Mike Houser*

84 Worldwide Fight Results

92 Flashback: August 1938

94 The Fight Doctor *by Margaret Goodman, M.D.*

96 Come Out Writing

98 Looking Ahead *by Joe Santoliquito*

[Ringside]

I've spent so much time the final few months of 2005 muttering "Thanks goodness for the little guys," it has practically become my mantra. By and large, I've always enjoyed the lighter-weight classes more than the heavyweights, and since the retirement of Lennox Lewis, the heavyweight scene has become an increasingly barren landscape. And when Vitali Klitschko followed Lewis into retirement in November, it got even bleaker.

Even though the smaller-weight classes habitually display superior skills and provide far more action, there's no escaping the fact that there is a lot of truth in the old saying that "as the heavyweights go, so goes boxing." It's not absolutely true, of course, but true enough to have a significant bearing on the health of the sport, and right now the heavyweight division is experiencing one of its periodic identity crises.

This sort of thing invariably happens when a dominant champion such as Lewis retires, basically because a dominant champ usually beats all of his worthy challengers prior to hanging up his gloves, leaving us with a sad collection of has-beens, retreads, and unproven prospects. Eventually, a new heavyweight dreadnought emerges and all is well again, but in the interim, there is no shortage of false messiahs, paper champs, and novelty acts confusing the issue.

The latest example of the latter category is Russian giant Nicolay Valuev, who recently took an alphabet strap away from John Ruiz. Not only does Valuev resemble Primo Carnera physically, he has come to the fore under similar circumstances.

The boxing world still hadn't completely recovered from the retirement of Jack Dempsey when the circus strongman from Italy won the title in 1933. Like Valuev, Carnera benefited from creative matchmaking and took the title from Jack Sharkey with a punch as phantom-like as the one Ali used to kayo Liston in Lewistown, Maine.

Ruiz didn't go into the tank, but there is more than one way to help the house fighter win. True, it wasn't the worst decision of all-time, but the boos from the crowd of 10,000 in Berlin, a crowd that was ostensibly there to root for Valuev, sure seemed to indicate Ruiz was shafted.

It didn't take long for Carnera to be exposed as a brave but appallingly limited fighter, and I'm sure Valuev will soon suffer a similar fate. But with Don King owning 50 percent of his next four fights, "The Beast From The East" could be hearing boos as his arm is raised for a while yet.

The best heavyweight match on the horizon is the one between James Toney and Hasim Rahman scheduled for March 18. Not only does it have a reasonable chance of being an entertaining fight, the build-up, which started with an impromptu brawl in a Mexican hotel lobby, should be billed as the trash-talking championship of the world. These two guys are bona fide Hall of Famers when it comes to flapping their gums.

But neither Toney nor Rahman is the guy we're looking for, even if one of them eventually becomes the legitimate heavyweight champion of the world. They're more like Ezzard Charles and Jersey Joe Walcott, a couple of worthy veterans who held down the fort between the end of Joe Louis' reign and the start of Rocky Marciano's.

The guy we're looking for isn't even on the radar screen yet, but you'll recognize him when he arrives. In the meantime, count your blessings and give thanks for the little guys.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 85, No. 3 April 2006

The RING

NATHANIEL S. FLEISCHER
Founder
(1888-1972)

STUART M. SAKS
Publisher

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Nigel Collins

MANAGING EDITOR
Joseph Santoliquito

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR
Greg Stevens

ART DIRECTORS
David Romanosky
Olivia Wierzbicki
Jim Malloy

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Bethany Lawler

PRE-PRESS DIRECTOR
Cliff Campo

IMAGING DIRECTOR
Kelly A. Grant

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Eric Raskin

SENIOR WRITER
William Dettloff

PRESIDENT
Despina McNulty

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Kenneth J. Gudaitis

SR. V.P. FINANCE/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Philip Ketonis

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
David Tyler

RETAIL SERVICES DIRECTOR
Briana Coppola

NATIONAL CIRCULATION MANAGERS
Robert Nucci
Dave Hagman

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Vincent Bellissima
(215) 643-6385
vbellissima@kappapublishing.com

ADVERTISING ASSISTANT
Dianne Weber

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES
London Publishing Co.
P.O. Box 2085
Marion, OH 43306-8185
(815) 734-1212

The Ring (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 85, No. 3, is published monthly by London Publishing Co., 6198 Butler Pike, Suite 200, Blue Bell, PA 19422. Periodicals postage paid at Blue Bell, PA 19422, and additional post offices. Postmaster: Send change of address notices to: The Ring, P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9, Marion, OH 43306-8121. Single copy price $5.95 ($7.00 in Canada, £2.95 in U.K.). Subscription price $83.40 in the U.S., $99.00 in Canada and remaining countries. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage.

The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2006 London Publishing Co. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy or content of any advertisements appearing in this magazine, nor the delivery or quality of merchandise or services offered. No endorsement of any such advertisement is intended or implied. Advertisers and agencies assume liability for claims arising from the content of their advertisements. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: (215) 643-6385. U.S. and Canadian distribution by Kable Distribution Services Inc., 641 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10022. International distribution by Worldwide Media Service Inc., 115 East 23rd St., New York, NY 10010, U.K. distribution by Comag, Tavistock Rd., West Drayton, Middlesex UB77QE, England.

Printed in U.S.A.

International Boxing Hall of Fame

Limited Autograph Souvenirs

Boxing Greats Helping Support the Museum

Certificate of Authenticity accompanies each item

EVERLAST SPEED BAG

$195

Autographed by 23 "Greats"

Arguello ★ Basilio ★ Buchanan ★ Carbajal ★ Chacon ★ Chuvalo ★ Corrales ★ Griffith ★ Hagler ★ LaMotta ★ Lopez ★ McGuigan ★ Minter ★ Mosley ★ Norris ★ Norton ★ Olivares ★ Pryor ★ Spinks ★ Starling ★ Stracey ★ Torres ★ Ward ★

GIANT GOLD GLOVE

$225

Autographed by 23 "Greats"

Arguello ★ Basilio ★ Buchanan ★ Carbajal ★ Chacon ★ Chuvalo ★ Corrales ★ Griffith ★ Hagler ★ LaMotta ★ Lopez ★ McGuigan ★ Minter ★ Mosley ★ Norris ★ Norton ★ Olivares ★ Pryor ★ Spinks ★ Starling ★ Stracey ★ Torres ★ Ward ★

MIDDLEWEIGHT GLOVE

6 Middleweight autographs on Everlast glove

★ Marvelous Marvin Hagler
★ Carmen Basilio
★ Emile Griffith
★ Jake LaMotta
★ Alan Minter
★ Nino Benvenuti

$125

★ Limited Quantity ★

ARGUELLO & PRYOR

Both champions on Everlast glove
OR
Both champions of Everlast trunks

ARGUELLO

$105

PRYOR

★ Limited Quantity ★

AUTOGRAPH GLOVES

$85

(single autograph on Everlast glove)

★ Earnie Shavers
★ Carmen Basilio
★ Leon Spinks
★ Michael Spinks
★ Aaron Pryor
★ Christy Martin
★ Ken Norton
★ Virgil Hill
★ Kid Gavilan
★ Ken Buchanan
★ Azumah Nelson
★ Buddy McGirt
★ Michael Carbajal
★ Barry McGuigan
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Dwight Qawi
★ Tommy Morrison
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Terry Norris
★ Livingstone Bramble
★ Ricardo "Finito" Lopez
★ James "Buster" Douglas
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez

CARBAJAL

WARD

MORRISON

NELSON

COMBINATION GLOVE

(two autographs on Everlast glove)

$105

★ Nelson - Fenech
★ Basilio - Fullmer
★ Arguello - Pryor
★ Benvenuti - Griffith
★ Leon & Cory Spinks

TODAY'S STARS

(single autograph on Everlast glove)

$85

★ Acelino "Popo" Freitas
★ Johnny Tapia
★ Arturo "Thunder" Gatti
★ Antonio "Magic Man" Tarver
★ Diego "Chico" Corrales
★ "Sugar" Shane Mosley
★ James "Lights Out" Toney

CHAMPIONSHIP GLOVE

All 22 autographs on Everlast glove

$195

Arguello ★ Basilio ★ Buchanan ★ Carbajal ★ Chacon ★ Chuvalo ★ Corrales ★ Griffith ★ Hagler ★ Lopez ★ McGuigan ★ Minter ★ Mosley ★ Norris ★ Norton ★ Olivares ★ Pryor ★ Spinks ★ Starling ★ Stracey ★ Torres ★ Ward ★

EVERLAST CORNER POST

$275

Autographed by 23 greats:

Arguello ★ Basilio ★ Buchanan ★ Carbajal ★ Chacon ★ Chuvalo ★ Corrales ★ Griffith ★ Hagler ★ LaMotta ★ Lopez ★ McGuigan ★ Minter ★ Mosley ★ Norris ★ Norton ★ Olivares ★ Pryor ★ Spinks ★ Starling ★ Stracey ★ Torres ★ Ward ★

BOXING ROBE

23 autographs on Everlast robe

$275

Arguello ★ Basilio ★ Buchanan ★ Carbajal ★ Chacon ★ Chuvalo ★ Corrales ★ Griffith ★ Hagler ★ LaMotta ★ Lopez ★ McGuigan ★ Minter ★ Mosley ★ Norris ★ Norton ★ Olivares ★ Pryor ★ Spinks ★ Starling ★ Stracey ★ Torres Ward

HEAVYWEIGHT GLOVE

5 Heavyweight autographs on Everlast glove

★ Ken Norton
★ Leon Spinks
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ George Chuvalo
★ Earnie Shavers

$125

Phone Orders: (315) 697-7095
Fax (315) 697-5356

Make checks payable to:
BOXING HALL OF FAME
1 Hall of Fame Drive
Canastota, NY 13032

Please add 8% Sales Tax
and $8.00 per item for shipping in U.S.
Call for International shipping rates

Who Will Stay & Who Will Go?

Here's a crazy stat for you: All eight men who held RING championships at the end of 2004 finished 2005 without those RING championships. Every last one. We tried to predict last year which of them would survive the year as champions, and we guessed four would stay and four would go. So, obviously, we batted .500.

We were right that Glen Johnson would lose the light heavyweight title, Cory Spinks would lose the welter crown, Kostya Tszyu would part with the junior welter belt, and Manny Pacquiao would relinquish the featherweight championship. We didn't predict heavyweight champ Vitali Klitschko's departure, middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins' dethroning, junior middle king Winky Wright's move up in weight, or lightweight champ Jose Luis Castillo's title loss (and subsequent ineligibility to regain the title).

Though we got as many wrong as we got right last year, we're giving it another shot this year anyway. And one thing that's for sure: With an odd number of RING champions (seven) at the close of 2005, we aren't going to bat .500 again.

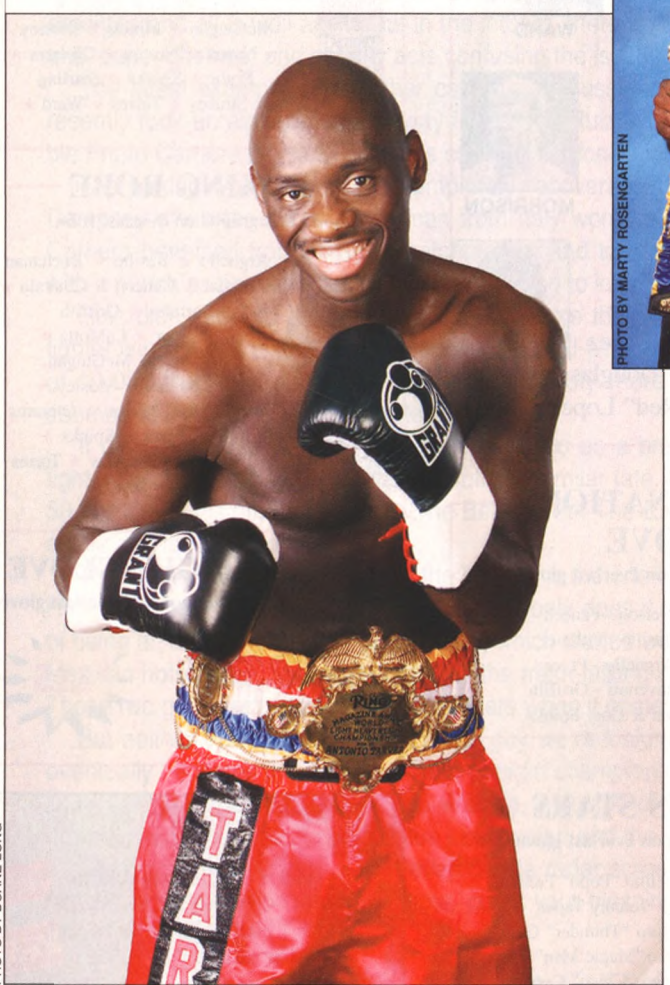


PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Tarver: Will he give up 175-pound belt to fight as heavyweight?

Jean-Marc Mormeck (cruiserweight champ): Because he had a defense scheduled for January 7 against O'Neil Bell, it's possible that the Frenchman will already be a "go" by the time you read this. But we strongly doubt it. Mormeck is the class of this division, and Bell, though a quality contender, is plenty flawed. Mormeck is beginning to talk about a move to heavyweight—as all top cruiserweights do—but we suspect that he can still make better money as king of the cruiserweights than he can as a lightly regarded heavyweight, and money talks. **Prognosis: Stay**

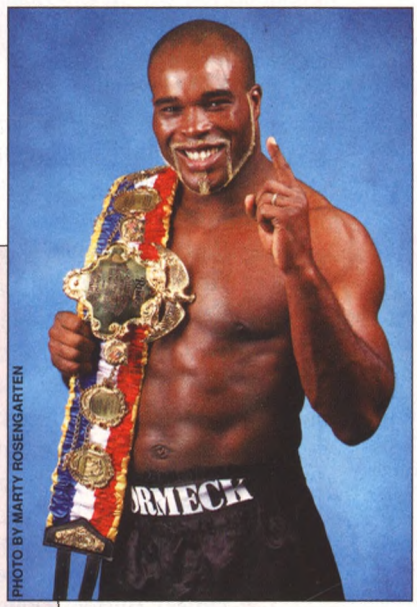


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Mormeck: First to put RING belt on the line in '06

Antonio Tarver (light heavyweight champ): Here's a fighter talking about trying out the heavyweight division who actually could make some big purses at the higher weight. Combine that with the distraction of starring in the new *Rocky* movie, the ever-present danger of a third fight with Glen Johnson, and the inconsistency that has hindered Tarver's career, and we don't see this 37-year-old still ruling the 175-pounders in a year. **Prognosis: Go**

Jermain Taylor (middleweight champ): It's hard to imagine anyone being less impressive in twice defeating a legendary champion than Taylor was against Hopkins in 2005. And it's sounding more and more like a fight with Winky Wright will happen before '06 is over. That sounds like trouble for the new middleweight king. **Prognosis: Go**

Zab Judah (welterweight champ): Mark April 8 on your calendars, boxing fans. It appears that will be the date of Judah vs. Floyd Mayweather, an absolute fight fan's dream matchup. It looks close to a tossup, but if you have to lean one way or the other, how can you pick the brilliant Mayweather to lose? **Prognosis: Go**

Ricky Hatton (junior welterweight champ): With a Mayweather fight looking unlikely, Hatton's number-one

threat is out of the picture. And the way he looked in '05, improving all the time, we'd pick "The Hitman" to hold off all the other threats in the deep 140-pound division. It won't be easy coming to America and presumably taking on some quality challengers, but if Hatton can beat up Kostya Tszyu, he should be able to stay on top a little while. **Prognosis: Stay**

Diego Corrales (lightweight champ): If you had to make a guess who's going to be the first champ to go in '06, Corrales would appear to have that undesirable inside track. On February 4, he's taking on the man who knocked him silly inside four rounds just four months earlier. Of course, the Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo series has been nothing if not unpredictable, but you have to figure the wars are starting to catch up with "Chico" a little bit. **Prognosis: Go**

Israel Vazquez (junior featherweight champ): This is a tricky one. The guy who assaulted Oscar Larios in December sure looks like a tough champ to dethrone. The guy who barely rallied past Armando Guerrero in May didn't look like much of a champ at all. And whichever version of Vazquez is showing up, he might be moving up to featherweight if there are bigger fights there. But this is a really hard-working guy who seems to be coming into his own, and our hunch is that he's going to want to keep his RING belt for a little while. **Prognosis: Stay**

—**Eric Raskin**

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Corrales and Castillo due to battle for THE RING lightweight belt again

Honor And Strife In California Boxing

PHOTO BY IVAN GOLDMAN

Fraser heads new group to honor and help boxers

The California Boxing Hall of Fame, a new group that emerged after a squabble within the Golden State Boxers Association, put on its first awards luncheon, which pulled in 250 paying customers in Los Angeles. The chief honoree could not be there – beloved *L.A. Times* sports columnist Jim Murray, who passed away in 1998.

Among the inductees were, in the boxer category, Andy "Kid" Heilman, Lonnie Bennett, fighter-turned-referee Lou Filippo, Danny "Little Red" Lopez, and Alvaro "Yaqui" Lopez. In the non-boxer category, Dan and Joe Goossen, Ken Thompson, Joe Olmos, and Marty Denkin picked up awards.

The new group was spearheaded by retired promoter Don Fraser, who last summer was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. The split with the Golden State Boxers Association began after Fraser, the driving force in the organization, gave *The Times* a list of previous honorees named by that group. The paper printed the list, but left out the name of a businessman inductee. Blaming Fraser for the omission, the offended member instigated a parliamentary vendetta that went on until Fraser and his pals broke off and began meeting under the new name. They also formed the Friends of California Boxing, which, as before, meets once a month in a restaurant and, as before, uses part of its dues to help out ex-boxers and other needy members of the boxing family.

Like *The Times*, we left out the name of the businessman. We suggest he blame Fraser again.

—**Ivan Goldman**

TV Fights of the Month

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
11/18/05	Marteze Logan W 8 Americo Santos	Showtime	jw	C	B	B+
Upset! You keep throwing prospects at a guy who can fight a little, eventually he's going to beat one						
11/18/05	Chad Dawson KO 11 Ian Gardner	Showtime	sm	C+	B+	C+
Frustrated 168-pounders everywhere owe Dawson a great debt						
11/18/05	Juan Manuel Lopez KO 2 Luis Bolano	Telefutura	jf	C+	C	D-
What's happened to Bolano, who's lost four in a row? This guy used to be able to fight a little						
11/18/05	Ubaldo Hernandez W 10 Ivan Hernandez	Telefutura	l	C	B-	B-
Late-round surge gets Ubaldo the nod in an upset; pretty good scrap						
11/25/05	Giovanni Segura W 8 Benji Garcia	Telefutura	fl	C	C-	C+
Hey judges, how many points is an undefeated record worth going in? Just so we know						
11/25/05	Martin Honorio W 10 Steven Luevano	Telefutura	f	B-	B	B+
Another upset; Honorio gets off the canvas and bangs around Luevano on way to solid win						
11/26/05	Carl Thompson W 10 Frederic Serrat	PPV	c	B	C-	C-
If you think Serrat did enough to win this, we won't argue with you						
11/26/05	**Ricky Hatton KO 8 Carlos Maussa**	**PPV**	**world jw**	**A+**	**B-**	**B-**
When you can handle a guy like Maussa as Hatton did here, you're the real deal						
12/2/05	Paul Williams KO 5 Alfonso Sanchez	Showtime	w	B-	C+	C+
So long as Williams was breathing, Sanchez didn't have a chance						
12/2/05	Gamaliel Diaz W 12 Robert Guerrero	Showtime	f	C+	A	B+
This is what happens when you match good young fighters against one another; someone loses, but everybody wins						
12/3/05	**Israel Vazquez KO 3 Oscar Larios**	**PPV**	**world jf**	**A+**	**A-**	**C+**
Is it us, or did Larios look a little relieved when this was stopped?						
12/3/05	Ike Quartey KO 10 Carlos Bojourquez	PPV	jm	B+	C+	C+
We don't know if Quartey can win the title again, but he looks damn good so far						
12/3/05	**Jermain Taylor W 12 Bernard Hopkins**	**PPV**	**world m**	**A+**	**B+**	**D+**
Let's make them sign a contract that promises they'll never fight one another again						
12/9/05	Mike Arnaoutis KO 1 Jose Leo Moreno	Telemundo	jw	C+	B+	B-
When did Arnaoutis learn how to turn over a right hand?						
12/9/05	Felix Flores KO 8 Carlos De La Cruz	Telemundo	w	C+	D-	C-
They could have stopped this one during the prefight instructions; kudos to De La Cruz for hanging in as long as he did						
12/9/05	Isidro Granados W 10 Alberto Ontiveros	Telefutura	f	C	C+	C
Isn't it fun watching a guy like Ontiveros hang in there by fouling his way through 10 rounds?						
12/10/05	Winky Wright W 12 Sam Soliman	HBO	m	A-	C+	B
Don't be fooled by this; Taylor doesn't win a round against Wright						
12/10/05	Danny Williams W 12 Audley Harrison	PPV	h	C-	B-	D
Audley, Primo Carnera called; and he's laughing						
12/16/05	Sultan Ibragimov KO 7 Lance Whitaker	PPV	h	C+	A-	B+
Does Whitaker remind anyone else of the guy who plays Robert on Everybody Loves Raymond*?*						
12/16/05	Samuel Peter W 10 Robert Hawkins	PPV	h	B-	C	C
Note to Peter: Harsh reality time; we only like you when you're knocking a guy's teeth out of his head						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

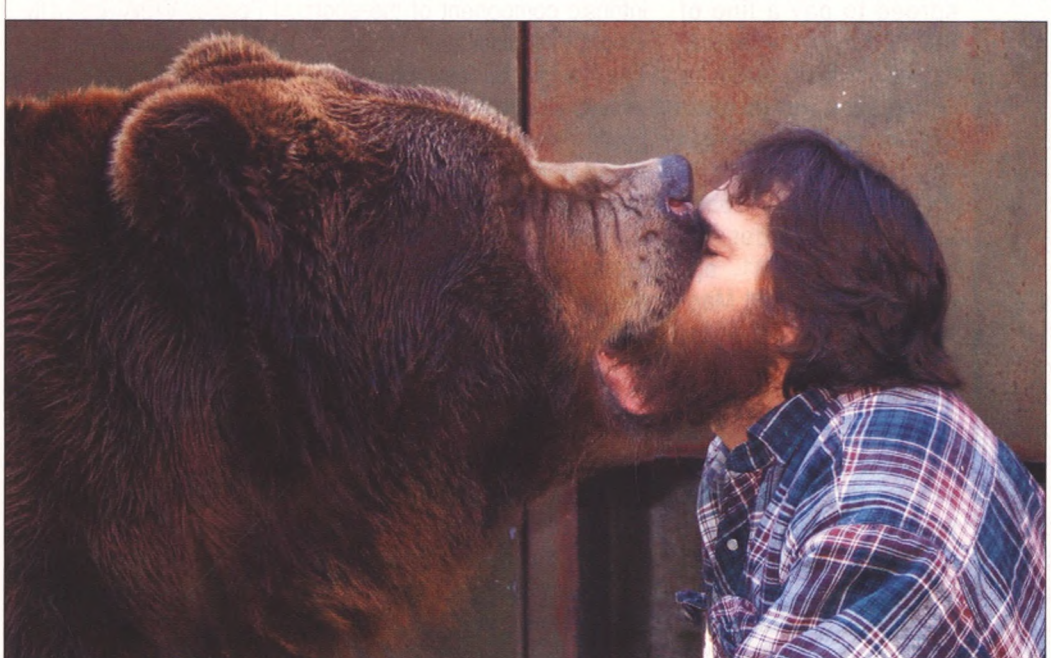
Ali Meets Another "Big, Ugly Bear"

When he was a high school student in the 1980s, Jeff Watson once called Jack Sharkey, the famously irascible former heavyweight champion, out of the blue to ask if Sharkey was still upset about his controversial kayo by Jack Dempsey in 1927. Collect, no less!

So, sticking his face in a grizzly bear's mouth really wasn't that big a leap for Watson, now one of the world's foremost bear handlers. Watson and his 1,300-pound Kodiak grizzly, "Brody," have appeared on *The Tonight Show* and many other programs and movies. Watson has been raising grizzlies for the last 14 years, and he and his wife, Leanne, operate J&L Bruins, which provides bears for films, TV, print ads, wildlife photography, and educational programs (www.kodiakgrizzly.com).

Watson shows Ali one of his ursine pals

Watson is also a boxing historian who spends lots of time researching the life of Sol Levinson, a San Francisco dress glove maker who also made the boxing gloves worn in many famous ring battles of the early-20th century, including Jeffries-Johnson and most of Jack Dempsey's heavyweight title fights. According to Watson, "Lacing up the Levinson's" was a well-known phrase back in the day.



This is why Ali said Watson is "nuts"

As a bear handler, one of the highlights of Watson's career was taking several of his animals to the Berrian Springs, Michigan, home of ex-heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali. After watching Watson put his face in "Brody's" mouth, Ali pronounced him nuts.

The always-loaded-for-bear Sharkey didn't go that far, but did tell Watson, regarding the Dempsey fight: "Hell, no! It was the biggest purse I ever made in boxing."

— Pete Ehrmann

Outside the Ropes

With even more deaths than usual to report this issue, let's get things rolling on a positive note: On December 3, the Dr. Theodore Atlas Food Pantry opened at the Parish of Saint Michael's Church in Staten Island. The panty, which will distribute free food to people in need, was established by ESPN boxing analysis **Teddy Atlas**. Donations can be mailed to: Dr. Theodore A. Atlas Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 140998, Staten Island, NY 10314 ... Recently retire heavyweight champion **Vitali Klitschko**, 34, has announced that he will run in Ukraine's parliamentary election in March 2006. Klitschko is hugely popular in the Ukraine and was a prominent supporter of the Orange Revolution protests that propelled **Viktor Yushchenko** to the presidency ... Nevada District U.S. Bankruptcy Judge **Bruce A. Markell** invalidated heavyweight **Hasim Rahman**'s promotional contract with **Don King** and allowed Rahman to sign with **Bob Arum**. Judge Markell also refused to assign Rahman's managerial contract to Monarch Sports, which is run by King's stepson, **Carl King**, and King's request to have a trustee oversee Rahman's finances was denied ... In another court decision that will impact the heavyweight division, Judge **Douglas Herndon** ruled that the Nevada State Athletic Commission cannot put **Joe Mesi** on permanent medical suspension and must lift the suspension, as his Nevada boxing license has expired. Mesi, 32, was suspended by the NSAC after suffering a brain bleed in his March 2004 fight with **Vassiliy Jirov**. Mesi is now free to apply for a license with any commission ... Promoter **Cedric Kushner** agreed to pay a fine of $60,000 to settle federal regulators' charges that he signed false and misleading financial statements filed by his company in 2003 ... Former IBF featherweight titleholder **Naseem Hamed**, 31, appeared at Sheffield Magistrates Court in December on a charge of dangerous driving. In May 2005, Hamed's car was involved in a collision with two other vehicles that left one man with a broken leg and two broken arms. No plea was entered and the case was adjourned until January 20 ... Former Canadian middleweight champion **Alex Hilton**, 40, was arrested for allegedly robbing a Montreal convenience store ... Former WBC cruiserweight titleholder **Juan Carlos Gomez**, now campaigning as a heavyweight, tested positive for cocaine following his October 15, 2005, decision over **Oliver McCall**. Gomez told fightnews.com: "Those tests must be incorrect or have been tampered with. At no time have I used cocaine. Somebody in Germany wants to damage my career" ... Boxing lost one its finest writers when **Pat Putman**, 75, died on November 27 due to complications from surgery. Putman covered boxing for *Sports Illustrated* for 27 years, including more than 50 covers stories, and was the winner of the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism in 1982. "He couldn't just write a fight story," said former Associated Press boxing writer **Ed Schuyler**. "He couldn't just tell you what happened, but why it happened. Nobody was better at telling 'the why' than Pat Putman" ... The death of Everlast Worldwide Chairman and CEO **George Horowitz** from kidney cancer in December was deeply felt throughout the boxing community. Horowitz, 55, bought Everlast in 2000 and resurrected the company. A friendly, energetic man, Horowitz loved boxing and boxers, and the walls of his Manhattan office were covered in photographs of famous fighters. A former high school teacher, Horowitz took an active interest in the sport and could frequently be seen at ringside. Under Horowitz' guidance, Everlast went from a musty relic of a bygone era to a progressive, cutting-edge company that is once again an intrinsic component of the sport ... Former WBA junior flyweight titleholder **Lupe Madera**, 52, died in late-November. The five-foot tall Mexican won the WBA 122-pound belt with a technical decision over **Katsuo Tokashiki** in July 1983. He made one successful defense, beating Tokashiki via 15-round unanimous decision. He lost the title to Francisco Quiroz in May 1984, and then retired with an overall record of 37-15-1 (23) ... Former world title judge, TV commentator, boxing historian, and RING correspondent **Ray Mitchell**, 86, died in Sydney, Australia in late-November. Mitchell was a MBE (Member of the British Empire), awarded for his contribution to boxing ... Former middleweight boxer and longtime chairman of the board of Ring 8 of the Veteran Boxers Association **Charley Gellman** died in late-November. Gellman, who was 88 at the time of his death, was only a preliminary fighter, but spent every dollar he earned in the ring to pay for his education. He graduated from Columbia University with a degree in engineering and later earned his M.B.A. Gellman worked as a hospital administrator for most of his career, and helped many indigent fighters receive proper medical attention, including former welterweight and middleweight champion **Mickey Walker**.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Rahman: Wins freedom from King

Putman: Dead at 75

Quotable

"The governor's ineptitude has so badly damaged the commission's reputation, it might never recover."

*—Kevin Iole, writing in the **Las Vegas Review-Journal** about Nevada's Governor Kenny Guinn mishandling of the Nevada State Athletic Commission.*

"Whenever you say no, there's no sign, it's hopeless, something happens."

—Bob Arum commenting on the current heavyweight scene.

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended December 19, 2005

Heavyweights: Nicolay Valuev enters at 10 following his controversial decision over John Ruiz, who slips from second to fifth. This bumps up Hasim Rahman (third last issue), James Toney (fourth last issue), and Lamon Brewster (fifth last issue) one position each. David Tua exits to make room for Valuev.

Cruiserweights: David Haye replaces Alexander Gurov at nine, based on Haye's first-round blowout of the Ukrainian.

Light heavyweights: No changes.

Super middleweights: No changes.

Middleweights: Winky Wright replaces Bernard Hopkins as the number-one contender after world champion Jermain Taylor defeated "The Executioner" in their rematch. Hopkins falls to number two, while Arthur Abraham (fourth last issue) and Felix Sturm (third last issue) switch positions based on Arthur's victory over Kingsley Ikeke (sixth last issue), who falls to eighth. Sam Soliman (seventh last issue) and Scott Dann (10th last issue) each advance one place, while Sebastian Sylvester (seventh last issue) jumps up two places because Chad Dawson (eighth last issue) is now fighting at super middleweight. Kelly Pavlik debuts at 10.

Junior middleweights: Sergej Dzindziruk debuts at three, courtesy of his upset victory over Daniel Santos, who drops from third to sixth. Dzindziruk's inclusion drops everyone rated sixth and below down one spot each and forces out Sergio Martinez.

Welterweights: Sebastian Lujan (10th last issue) exits following his kayo loss to journeyman Marco Avendano. Carlos Baldomir enters at 10.

Junior welterweights: Carlos Maussa drops from third to sixth after being stopped in the ninth round by world champion Ricky Hatton. Kostya Tszyu, Jose Luis Castillo, and Junior Witter move up one slot.

Lightweights: No changes.

Junior lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior featherweights: Israel Vazquez (third last issue) becomes world champion after his third-round TKO of Oscar Larios (first last issue), who switches with Mahyar Monshipour (second last issue). With Vazquez becoming champion, everyone rated from fourth through ninth moves up, and Daniel Ponce De Leon enters at 10.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: No changes.

Junior flyweights: Junichiro Kaneda (ninth last issue) leaves after a loss at strawweight. Nabuaki Masuda advances from 10th to ninth and Edgar Sosa enters at 10.

Strawweights: No changes.

Pound-for-pound: Ricky Hatton closed out '05 with a dominant performance over Carlos Maussa, advancing him from seventh to fourth. Hatton's upgrade causes Manny Pacquaio (fourth last issue) to drop one slot, and Juan Manuel Marquez (fifth last issue) to slip to seventh. Taylor and Hopkins each exit based on lackluster showings in their rematch. Rafael Marquez enters at eighth, dropping Jose Luis Castillo to ninth, while Zab Judah debuts at 10.

The RING
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
3. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
5. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
6. **Erik Morales**
   Junior Lightweight
7. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Featherweight
8. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
9. **Jose Luis Castillo**
   Junior Welterweight
10. **Zab Judah**
    Welterweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended December 19, 2005

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Nicolay Valuev enters the heavyweight ranks after a controversial decision over John Ruiz

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 39-2-1 (20)
2. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 41-5-1 (33)
3. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-4-2 (43)
4. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-2 (29)
5. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-6-1 (28)
6. **MONTE BARRETT** Queens, NY 31-4 (17)
7. **CALVIN BROCK** Charlotte, NC 27-0 (21)
8. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 45-3 (40)
9. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 25-1 (21)
10. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 43-0 (31)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 34-1-1 (21)
2. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 22-2-1 (14)
3. **SERGEJ DZINDZIRUK** Germany 31-0 (21)
4. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 26-2 (22)
5. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-2-1 (31)
6. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 29-3-1 (20
7. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 38-10-1 (20)
8. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 59-6 (39)
9. **RODNEY JONES** Lafayette, LA 36-3-1 (22)
10. **ALEJANDRO GARCIA** Mexico 25-1 (24)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 44-2-1 (33)
2. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 30-2-1 (18)
3. **HUMBERTO SOTO** Mexico 38-5-2 (22)
4. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 25-1 (18)
5. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 25-2-2 (14)
6. **VICTOR POLO** Colombia 36-5-3 (26)
7. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 36-0-1 (20)
8. **JOAN GUZMAN** Dominican Republic 24-0 (17)
9. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 32-1 (10)
10. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 23-0-1 (17)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 39-3 (29)

1. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR** France 28-2-2 (19)
2. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 56-4-1 (36)
3. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 23-2 (16)
4. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGYM** Thailand 23-0 (15)
5. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 27-1 (18)
6. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG** Thailand 43-2-1 (18)
7. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 23-0 (14)
8. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 22-0-1 (5)
9. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 22-0 (8)
10. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 27-1 (25)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 35-3 (31)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 19-2 (6)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 50-2-2 (35)
4. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 31-4 (27)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 18-1 (15)
6. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 34-4 (20)
7. **CRUZ CARVAJAL** Mexico 25-13-1 (21)
8. **RICARDO VARGAS** Mexico 39-11-3 (13)
9. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 65-9 (42)
10. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 18-0 (6)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK
France 31-2 (21)

1. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 33-3-2 (26)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 18-0 (9)
3. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 45-12-2 (29)
4. **CARL THOMPSON**
England 34-6 (25)
5. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-2 (17)
6. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 25-1-1 (23)
7. **DALE BROWN**
Canada 35-4-1 (22)
8. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
9. **DAVID HAYE**
England 15-1 (15)
10. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 33-1 (26)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 24-3 (18)

1. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 43-10-2 (29)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 23-0 (14)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-4 (38)
4. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 38-3-1 (23)
5. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
France 47-2 (31)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 30-0 (21)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 39-3 (23)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 24-2 (18)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 25-2 (13)
10. **ERIC HARDING**
West Hartford, CT 23-3-1 (7)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
Wales 40-0 (31)
2. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 36-0 (27)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 21-0 (17)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 33-2 (12)
5. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 25-3 (20)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 21-2 (19)
7. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 20-5 (18)
8. **OTIS GRANT**
Canada 38-2-1 (17)
9. **ROBIN REID**
England 38-5-1 (27)
10. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 22-0 (16)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 25-0 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 50-3 (25)
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 46-4-1 (32)
3. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 19-0 (17)
4. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 24-1 (11)
5. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
England 40-3 (35)
6. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 31-8 (12)
7. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 20-1 (8)
8. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-2 (13)
9. **SCOTT DANN**
England 23-2 (16)
10. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 27-0 (24)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: ZAB JUDAH
Brooklyn, NY 34-2 (25)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 32-4 (23)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 34-3 (11)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 41-4 (35)
4. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 26-1 (12)
5. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
Denmark 37-0 (27)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 25-1 (23)
7. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA**
Worcester, MA 37-4-1(24)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 36-3 (11)
9. **DAVID ESTRADA**
Chicago, IL 18-2 (9)
10. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
Argentina 41-9-6 (12)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 40-0 (30)

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 35-0 (24)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 25-0 (21)
3. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
Australia 31-2 (25)
4. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 53-7-1 (47)
5. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 33-1-2 (19)
6. **CARLOS MAUSSA**
Colombia 19-3 (16)
7. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 39-7 (30)
8. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 25-2-1 (17)
9. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 31-4-1 (17)
10. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 40-8-1 (26)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-3 (33)

1. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 31-3-1 (19)
2. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 35-3-1 (27)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 28-0 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 32-3 (24)
5. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 37-1 (32)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-1 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-3 (29)
8. **ISAAC HLATSHWAYO**
South Africa 22-0 (9)
9. **LAVKA SIM**
Mongolia 21-4-1 (18)
10. **RICKY QUILES**
Puerto Rico 38-6-3 (8)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 61-4 (42)
2. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-3 (34)
3. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 40-3-2 (31)
4. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 22-1-1 (11)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 45-3-1 (36)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 45-2-1 (32)
7. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-6-1 (24)
8. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 21-1 (17)
9. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
Australia 25-3 (14)
10. **JANOS NAGY**
Hungary 23-0 (14)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 29-1 (16)
2. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 31-3-1 (8)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 23-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 32-1-1 (24)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-1 (26)
6. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 28-4 (18)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 23-1 (10)
8. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
South Africa 26-3 (17)
9. **GERRY PENALOSA**
Philippines 49-5-2 (33)
10. **MBWANA MATUMLA**
Tanzania. 15-1 (9)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 58-2 (31)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 27-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 24-0 (19)
4. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 42-3-1 (32)
5. **IRENE PACHECO**
Colombia 30-1 (23)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 19-0-2 (13)
7. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
Nicaragua 36-2-2 (23)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 19-1 (7)
9. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 24-3-1 (10)
10. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 38-14-3 (22)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 21-1 (17)
2. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-2-1 (11)
3. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 22-3-1 (16)
4. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 22-2-2 (13)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 18-0 (12)
6. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 19-1 (15)
7. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-4-1 (20)
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
Colombia 35-4 (21)
9. **NABUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 21-3 (3)
10. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 21-5 (12)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 19-1-3 (8)
2. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 50-7-4 (22)
3. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 24-0 (5)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 14-1 (5)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 15-2 (7)
6. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-7-3 (13)
7. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 19-3-1 (16)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-2-1 (10)
9. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 35-4-1 (30)
10. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 21-0 (16)

By Jeff Ryan

A B-Hop, Skip, And A Jump

That the close decision this time was justified doesn't mean that the Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins rematch left us feeling all warm and toasty inside. Simply put, when a dynasty like Hopkins surrenders the middleweight belt after 20 successful defenses, then comes up short again while trying to regain it, it's supposed to feel as though the proverbial torch has been passed. Taylor's margin of victory in the two bouts, however, made the ritual seem more like an exchange of a flickering birthday cake candle.

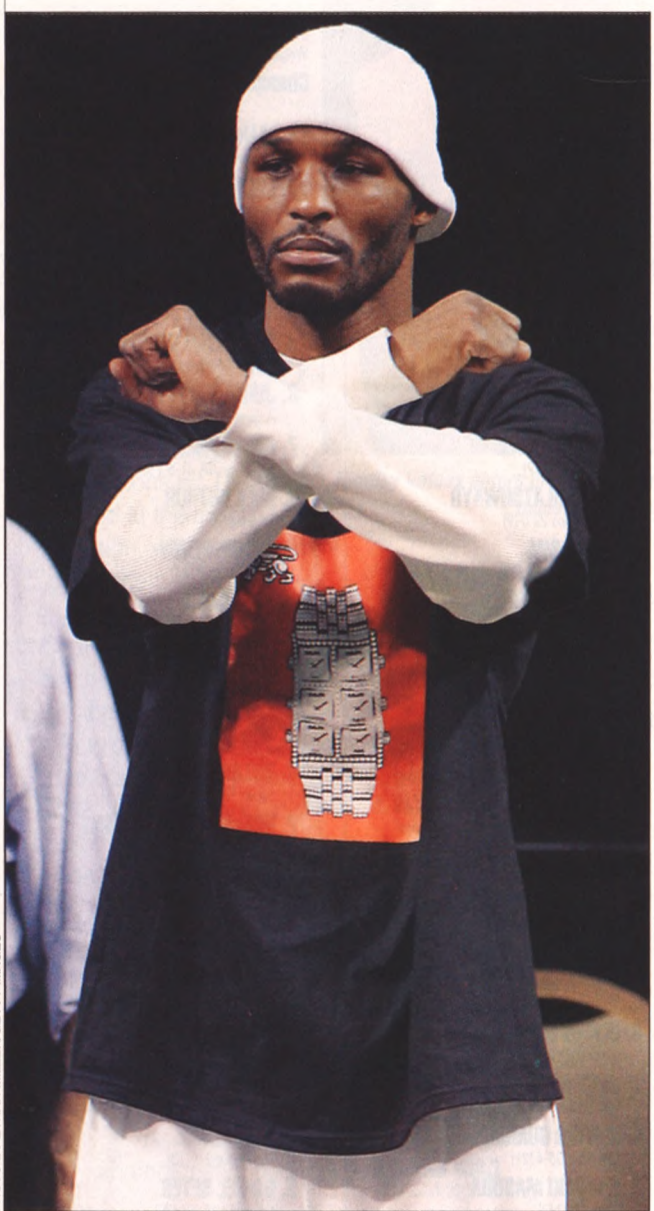


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins: A blur of contradictions

And yet, if this indeed ends Hopkins' association with the 160-pound title (in one form or another) after a decade, perhaps we should take some comfort in the discomfort we're feeling over the way things concluded. Maybe we should recognize that his ill-fitting finale was actually, uh, quite fitting. That's because there's always been something a little off-kilter about Hopkins, a sense that the guy was rarely going to give us a performance in the ring, quote in the notebook, or decision at the negotiating table that tied up everything in a neat little package.

For much of his life, Hopkins has been a blur of contradictions: An intelligent guy who did hard time in prison for muggings and assaults, an intimidator who lacked one-punch power, a graybeard who was racing the clock yet sometimes took fights with no upside, an overlooked great who sought mainstream acceptance yet threw the Puerto Rican flag on the ground to make headlines, a patriot who stopped wearing a hood during his ring entrance out of sympathy for hostages being beheaded in Iraq, yet continued to deliver a slit-your-throat gesture to the TV cameras, and a victim of boxing politics who loathed promoters but eventually became one himself.

Hopkins never had time to wrap everything in a neat little package because his hands were so full of all that baggage he was carrying around. As challenging as it could be to gain an understanding of who he really was, though, it was fun to speak with him or listen when he had to get something off that knife-scarred chest of his. Interviewers had to be as ready for a counterpunch as Taylor did, for Hopkins loved answering a question with a question or reminding a writer of something the poor guy had written exactly three years, two months, four days, six hours, and 17 minutes earlier. Something, as you can probably guess, that didn't please B-Hop.

Hopkins loves to show off the wounds from the three times he was knifed, and relate tales of life in the slammer. ("I saw guys get stabbed, raped, extorted," he once told me. "If you weren't prepared, they were going for your jugular.") Of his street life, he says, "I had a nasty rep. Guys would sh_t in their pants when they saw me." And my favorite Hopkins quote: "When a promoter tells me, 'Do what I say or I won't get you any fights,' doesn't he know that I once shared a prison cell with a guy who did two homicides and knew he was never going home? Like I'm supposed to be intimidated."

Fortunately for "The Executioner," his list of ring achievements is far longer than his rap sheet. He would get to Canastota on that division-record number of defenses alone. But even if the figures weren't quite so lofty (and let's face it, a Joe Lipsey here, a Morrade Hakkar there, and three fights with Robert Allen everywhere helped pad the total), Hopkins would be a lock on the basis of his knocking out superstars Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya, going unbeaten for 12 years, unifying the middleweight crown for the first time in 14 years, holding the pound-for-pound title for a stretch, and competing at a championship level through the eve of his 41st birthday.

What *will* go overlooked on that day when Hopkins is interrupting a cushy retirement for what is sure to be a colorful induction speech, however, is his link to his hometown and the pride he took in maintaining it. It's distressing that Hopkins, cruiserweight Steve Cunningham, and lightweight Zahir Raheem are currently the only three world-class fighters who hail from Philadelphia, the city that gave boxing Jack O'Brien, Midget Wolgast, Harold Johnson, Matthew Saad Muhammad, Jeff Chandler, Meldrick Taylor, Bennie Briscoe, Willie "The Worm" Monroe, Cyclone Hart, Frank "The Animal" Fletcher, George Benton, and a whole lot of cab drivers, pretzel vendors, and cheese steak cooks who know how to slip a jab and double up on the hook.

Raheem fights out of Las Vegas these days, but Hopkins never left home. Oh, sure, he moved to a big house in Delaware, but was forever commuting back to the Philly ghetto to train, determined to keep his link to the city's fistic tradition and remind himself that he's a survivor. "Saigon," he told me when asked to describe his old neighborhood.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

HBO should give Hopkins the microphone

Hopkins could always turn a phrase as well as he could turn a right cross at the point of impact, which is why the executives of HBO should be ordered to take drug tests if they fail to sign him as an analyst for the network's boxing coverage. (And we're talking the varsity: Jim Lampley, Larry Merchant, and *World Championship Boxing*, not the B team on *Boxing After Dark*.) B-Hop's blend of strategic insight, candor, and political incorrectness would make for compelling telecasts.

It seems a bit strange to be writing a farewell to Hopkins—or at least to his days as a title holder/threat. His old-school style, guile, and ability to control the action in just enough spurts to impress the judges and keep the opponent guessing fooled some of us into thinking he'd remain at the top of the division indefinitely. And had he won one more of the late rounds of the Taylor rematch and given away one less of the early ones, back on top is where he'd be. But Hopkins isn't likely to obsess over the what-ifs. Not him, a guy who points to the scar over his heart and matter-of-factly explains how doctors told him he's lucky that he didn't sneeze before reaching the emergency room that time the blade was plunged into him. For, surely, he would have bled to death.

An era is over. And you wonder what other great era never took shape because some fighter blessed with talent took a knife an inch too close to the heart, squandered a second chance at freedom, let the jackals in the cellblock go after his jugular, let a promoter intimidate him, or folded when he stared into the eyes of Father Time.

Bernard Hopkins did a nice job making it through the rain—and the reign. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Honoring The Sweet Side

The late Eddie Futch, one of the greatest trainers of all time, was a deeply perceptive observer. This makes him a fitting counterpart to Mister Magoo, who is always sure of himself but never understands what he's looking at. Both names stick in the memory like fine old trees you climbed in your youth. Futch even has the sound of a good, clean punch. This month, because the world is both sweet and sour, we balance Magoos with Futches. We'll give you the good news first, and leave the Magoos in their traditional bottom-of-the-column spot.

Futch 1: To Sharmba Mitchell. Knowing he was outclassed by stratospherically talented Floyd Mayweather, he still refused to run or clinch. Until he lost, he kept trying to win.

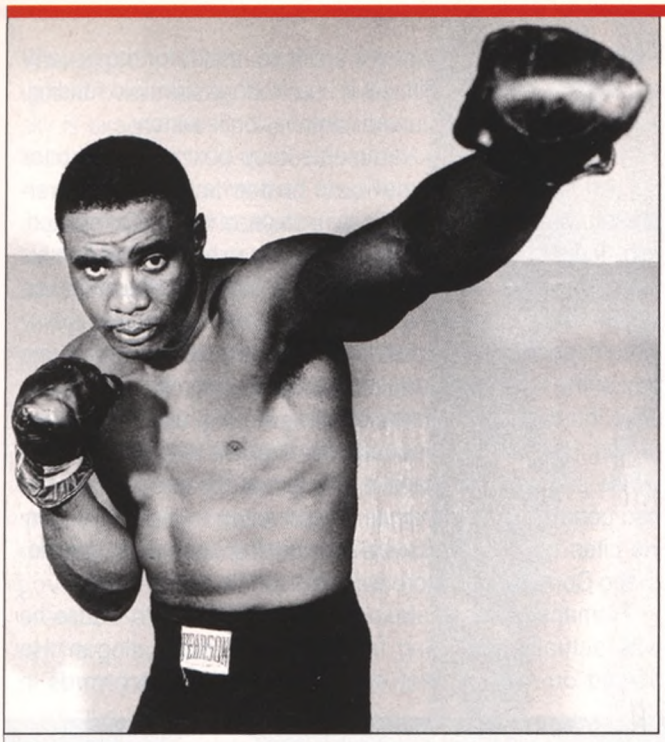
Futch 2: To Sylvester Stallone. If the *Rocky* series continues in its present trajectory, then number six won't be as well-crafted as number five, which was not as good as number four, and so on. But the Oscar-winning original *Rocky* was a lovely fable that has done nothing but good things for boxing. So as far as Stallone's reputation is concerned, we should attach no more significance to another stinker than we do to the third act of Joe Louis' career.

Futch 3: To Showtime, for scheduling back-to-back, February and March, Castillo-versus-Corrales III and Jeff Lacy-versus-Joe Calzaghe, without saddling us with pay-per-view misery.

Alphabet Heavies: As I write this, the respective

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

At least mismatched Mitchell tried to win



Liston would have run roughshod over the best of today's heavyweights

WBC, WBA, IBF, and WBO heavyweight titlists are Hasim Rahman, John Ruiz, Robert Byrd, and Lamon Brewster. A prime Sonny Liston would knock them all to the canvas with one sweep of his arm.

The marketplace tells us those belts of theirs have been terribly devalued, and slapping one around the waist of a mediocre fighter just won't work the way it used to. Pathologically dull titlist John Ruiz couldn't even find a U.S. network to televise his December 17 title defense in Germany against Nicolay "The Beast From The East" Valuev. I almost feel sorry for the clinch-mongering schnook, who once retired and un-retired in less time than it takes to open a childproof cap.

Want To Reform Boxing? Think Luxembourg: It's no tragedy that the same people who anointed "Heck Of A Job Brownie" as supreme leader at FEMA won't get the opportunity to appoint members of a new federal boxing commission. The House of Representatives, most of whose members view the fight game as only slightly more respectable than peddling crack, sank, by the sizeable margin of 233-190, the bill that would have established such a national body.

With the sport in such desperate need of operational sanity, Teddy Atlas thinks there's a racist component to this lack of congressional compassion. I disagree. And unlike most stuff I write about, I actually know something about Congress. In another life, I used to cover the House of Representatives for a large metropolitan daily. And I can tell you for sure why this bill was turned down. No one offered House members any money to pass it.

Start dangling campaign contributions in front of them

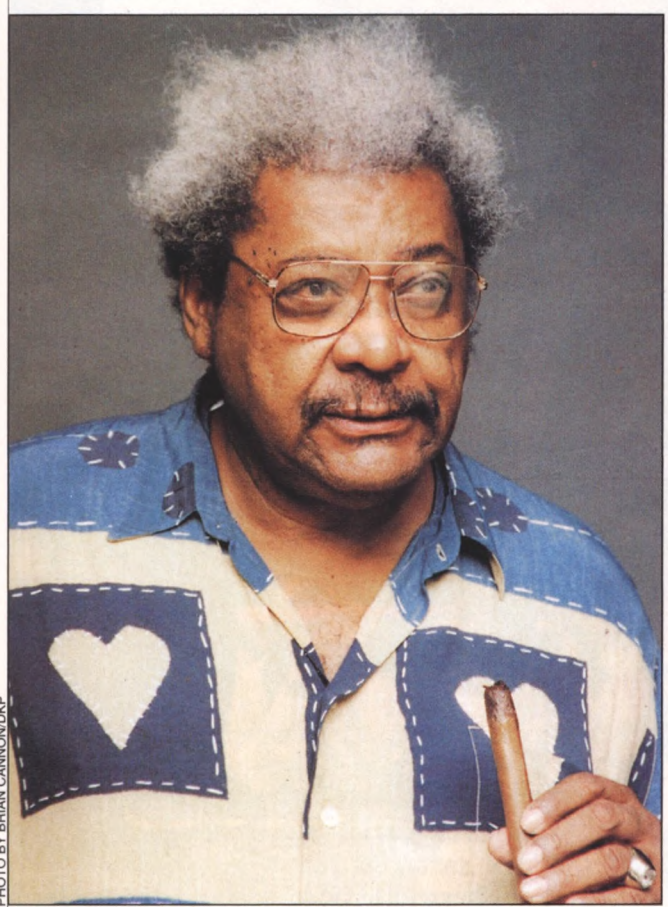


PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DRP

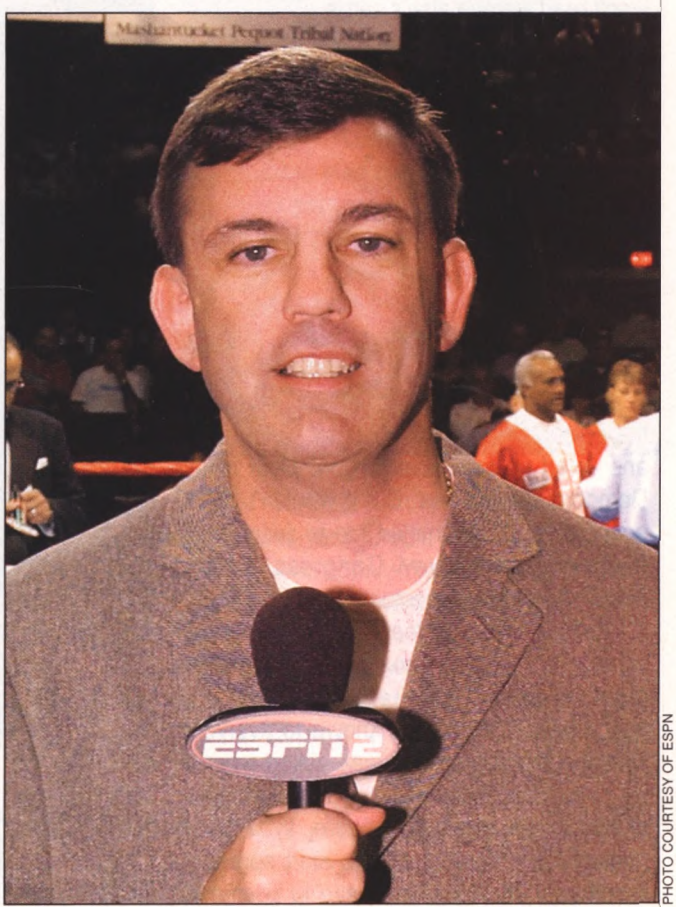


PHOTO COURTESY OF ESPN

King was against a federal commission; Atlas was in favor

Was Dr. Homansky a victim of politics?

and they'll snap up your proposals like frogs gulping flies. Dangle *lots* of money in front of them and a federal boxing commission will be swiftly fished out of the tank, fed, groomed, and pampered like a *Fortune* 500 company. Not only will concerned congressional members take your calls, they'll let you choose how you want your bill—with lots of speechifying and publicity, or, if you prefer, slipped at 2 a.m. inside legislation on Idaho prairie dogs or Connecticut dingle berry production.

They're not running a beauty contest over there. They're passing the plate. If you want a favor you're expected to lay down some serious currency. It's a simple process and certainly not alien to boxing, where promoters help choose the officials who will oversee their promotions and also sign their checks. Promoters and members of Congress are close in spirit and method. They play with marked decks, but promise us they won't read anyone else's cards.

Boxing powers that could make things happen in Washington are the networks. HBO, Showtime, Fox, and ESPN are all owned by enormous multinational corporations whose lobbyists can sniff out a government favor downwind from a pig ranch. But the networks are content with things just the way they are. So are the big promoters and various state and Native American casino commissions, not to mention the alphabet gangs. Political donor and federal commission opponent Don King has particular clout within the Republican Party. Most House Republicans voted no to a commission. Most House Democrats voted yes. But it wouldn't be impossible for a determined foe to sway King's friends the other way. Congress is full of equal-opportunity collectors.

It's only natural to fear the unknown, and if somehow a reformed boxing with honest, efficient governance were established, that would be an absolute unknown to everyone. Like the Mafia guy who was asked whether he thought an accomplice would dummy up or talk to the cops, they figure, *Why take a chance?* Besides, when you start spreading around contributions, you have to keep them coming. What you paid last year was great, but time marches on, and it's a simple matter for the government to take back a gift. All it has to do is withhold funding, and presto, the cash-starved commission is history.

Meanwhile, state governments keep boxing in their back pockets as yet another device to bestow favors on the ever-present sharks trailing their mini-ships of state. Committed, knowledgeable Dr. Flip Homansky, for example, just lost his seat on the Nevada commission to a big political contributor. When he was a ring physician back in the 1980s, Homansky spearheaded a movement to change the weigh-in from the day of the fight to the day before. He thought this would alleviate the danger of fighters entering the ring weak and dehydrated. But after his proposal was adopted and it led to even worse problems, Homansky proclaimed the weigh-in system had gone crazy and that we should return to the old system. He cited the weight issues surrounding Jose Luis Castillo-Diego Corrales II as more evidence for his new position.

Homansky wasn't afraid to change his mind because he was actually searching for a solution, not a slogan. He stayed *on mission*. Not *on message*—the watchwords in

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Thanks for nothing, guys

Washington, where consistency is valued over making sense. Homansky is exactly the kind of expert boxing can't afford to lose, but Governor Kenny Guinn decided to lose him anyway in favor of someone who follows protocol and loads the collection plate with cold cash.

If it were up to me, I wouldn't pay any of these political suckfish in either party a nickel to give us a federal boxing commission. Sure, we need standard overall governance to overcome the sport's historic and still current state of anarchy. I just think this governance should come from a different government than the one that searched Al Gore in an airport and can't even hold a proper election.

Right now I'm leaning toward Luxembourg. It's a relatively clean, honest, little country. Not pretentious. Just does its job as a dull, prosperous spot below Belgium. Doing okay and boring everyone the way Luxembourg does is far superior to being untrustworthy and screwing everyone the way both boxing and Washington do. The fact that most Luxembourgians don't know middleweights from mangos is a negative. But given the state of American government, the state of the Luxembourg government, and the state of boxing, my Luxembourg proposal makes perfect sense. Even though it's crazy.

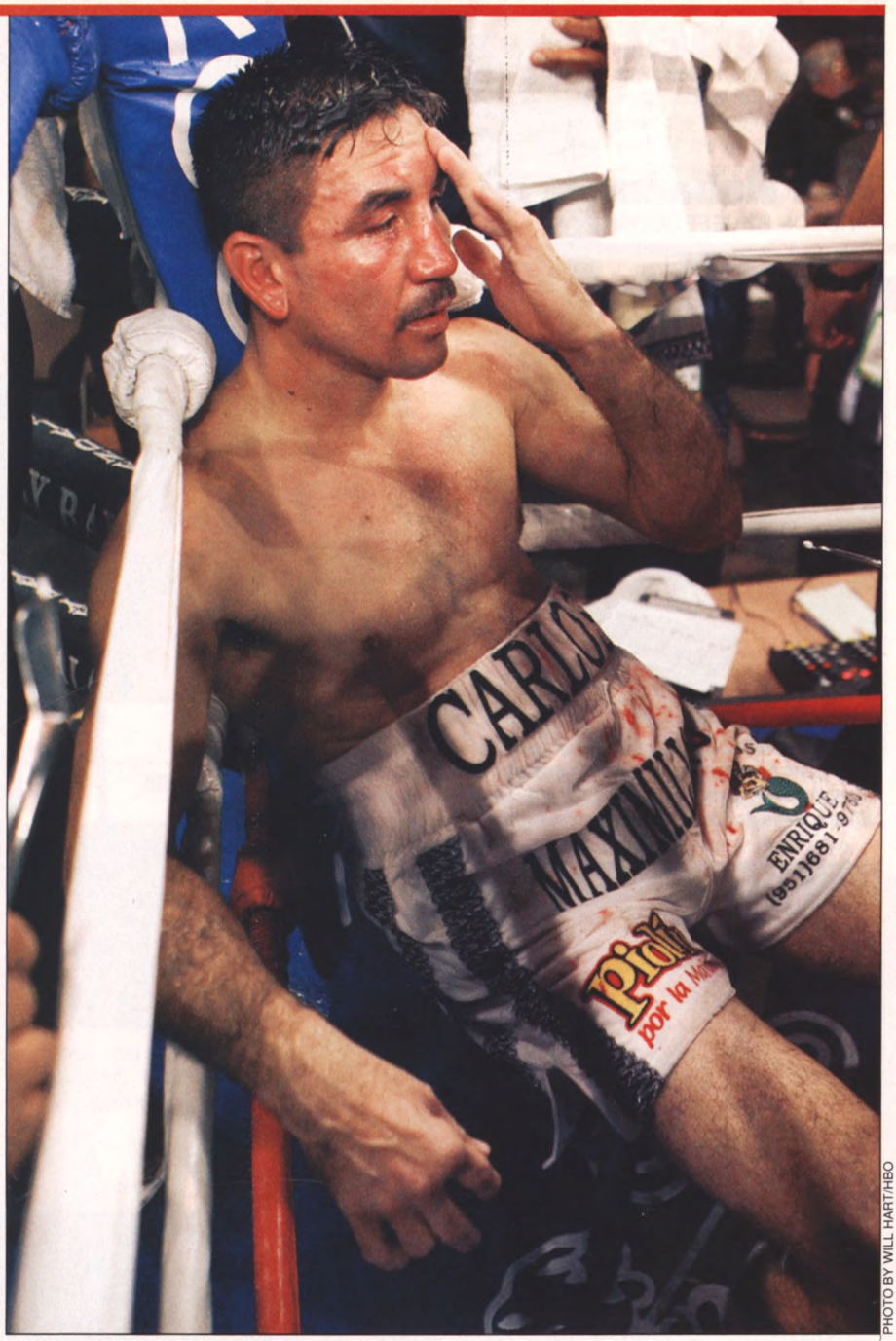


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Why wasn't battered Bojorquez rescued earlier?

Magoo 1: To Jermain Taylor, who again let 40-year-old moderate hitter Bernard Hopkins dictate a torpid pace and who actually thought he had something to celebrate when he squeezed out a decision.

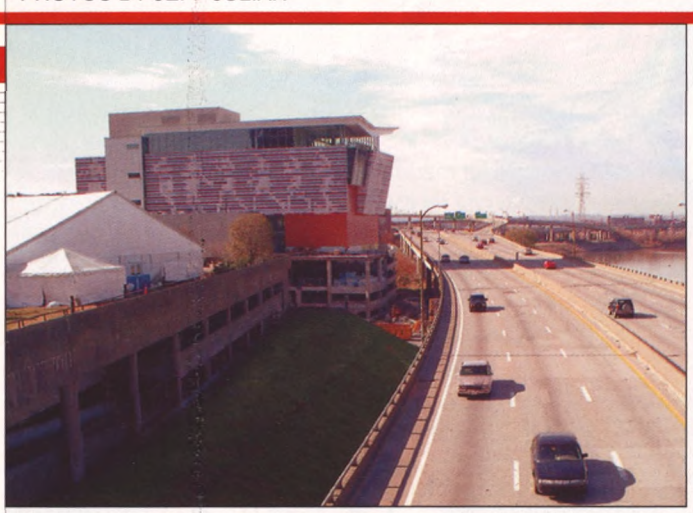
Magoo 2: To Hopkins, who devolved from a true champion into Bernard Bore-Zilla, who, instead of trying to win, tries not to lose.

Magoo 3: To the corner of Carlos Bojorquez, who watched Ike Quartey shoot stiff, clean punches at their fighter's increasingly busted up head for 11⅔ rounds. By round seven, Bojorquez, an early threat, was no more than a feather-dusting victim. To referee Joe Cortez, who figured out much too late that someone ought to stop it. To front-row witness Marc Ratner, the safety-first executive director of the Nevada commission who never figured it out. To the four ring physicians in attendance who apparently believed that if they kept an eye on Bojorquez' cut they were doing their job.

Magoo 4: To HBO, Lou DiBella, Golden Boy, and all the other pirates who split the $49.95-a-pop booty from Taylor-Hopkins Flop-a-Ganza II. The event was equivalent to one of those inept Hollywood sequels based on a mediocre film. Showtime should have stared down HBO and gone ahead with its regular first-Saturday-of-the-month show in December. By raising a white flag to the Taylor-Hopkins con job, it left us to with nothing to cling to but our naïve hope that this time things would be different. ■

The Muhammad Ali Center Opening

PHOTOS BY JEFF JULIAN

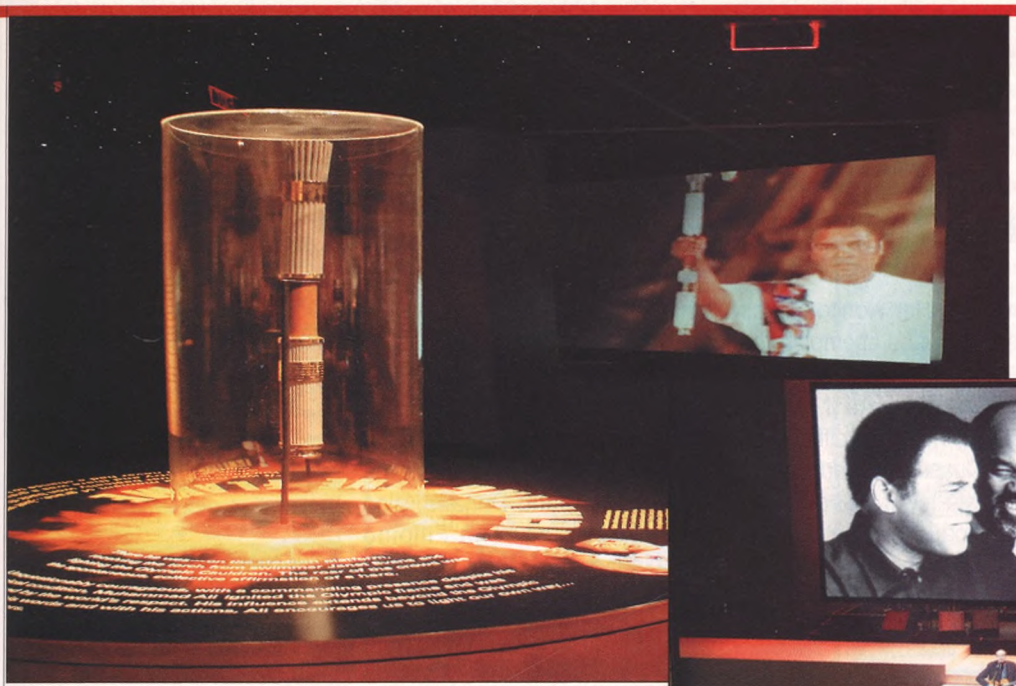


Cars speed by the magnificent new Muhammad Ali Center in the legendary three-time heavyweight champion's hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. The six-story building, which had a price tag of $75-million and was designed by Beyer Blinder Belle Architects and Planners, overlooks the Ohio River.

Gloves, trunks, robes, photos, posters—all things associated with the boxing career of Ali are on display at the Center. The only things missing are The Greatest's protective cups.

The grand-opening gala on Saturday, November 19, attracted plenty of celebrities and lots of red-carpet interviews, and one celeb who sure as heck wasn't missing this event was Laila Ali, the champ's daughter. We wonder if anyone asked her what graveyard she'd be digging through for her next opponent.

The most anticipated arrival of all was surely that of the guest of honor and his wife, Lonnie. Mrs. Ali is the vice-chair on the executive committee of the Ali Center's Operating Board of Directors.

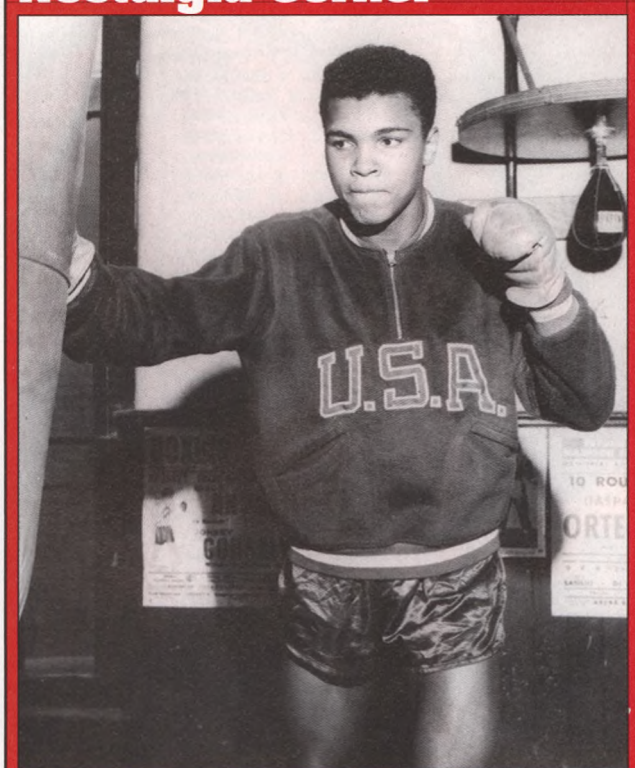


Nobody will ever forget the role Ali played in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, and this is the actual torch he held to light the Olympic flame. No truth to the rumor that David Reid is going to donate his right hand to this part of the exhibit.

"In my mind, I'm going to ... Louisville." James Taylor performed during a tribute honoring the friendship between Ali and Howard Bingham, and no, "Going To Carolina" probably wasn't the song he chose—not when he's got a little ditty called "You've Got A Friend" in his catalog.

On the day after the grand-opening gala, there was the public dedication of the Muhammad Ali Center, at which Muhammad and Lonnie greeted the crowd gathered in The Greatest's honor. The Center opened to the public the next day, and is expected to draw about 350,000 visitors a year.

Nostalgia Corner



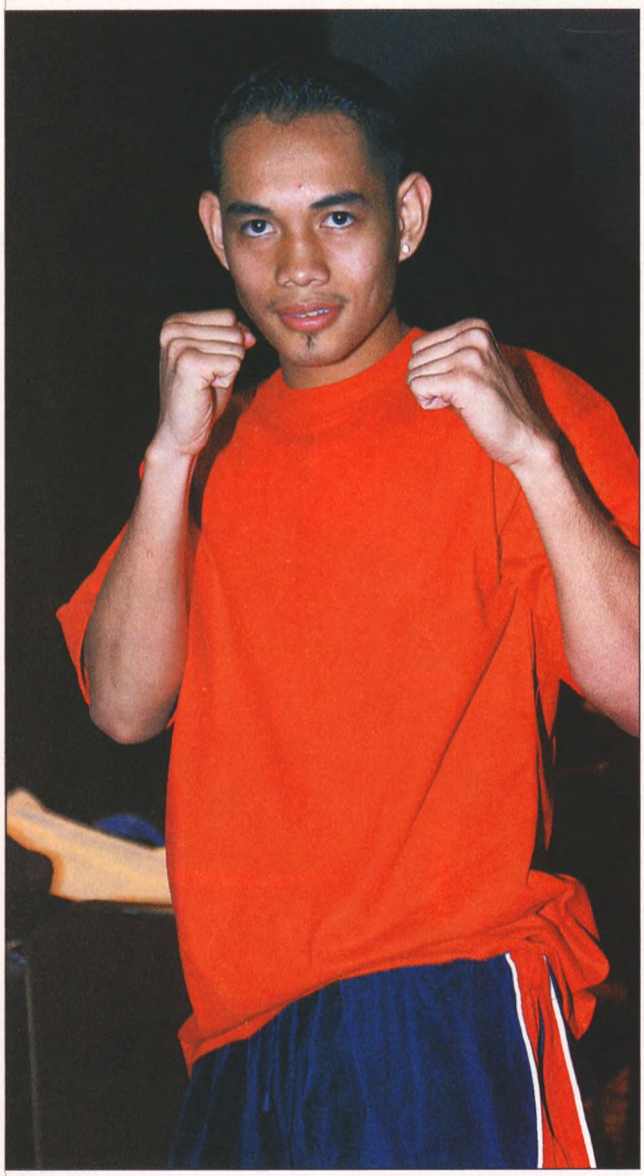
This is what Ali looked like in 1960 as he prepped for the Olympic Games in which he would win light heavyweight gold and launch a pro career that eventually made him the most famous boxer of all-time.

By Mike Houser
PHOTOS BY JUSTINE BYRNE

Nonito Donaire Junior Bantamweight

The adversity kept mounting for Nonito Donaire, who was trying to find his wind as he attempted to fend off the attacks of Ilido Julio on November 5, 2005, at Caesars Tahoe in Stateline, Nevada. As if Lake Tahoe's 6,200-foot altitude wasn't already making it difficult enough to find air, Julio decided to play Quasimodo and turn Donaire's family jewels into his own private tower bell of Notre Dame, repeatedly hitting his younger foe below the belt every time the referee moved out of position to see it.

"You know what it's like when you get kicked in the testicles—you can't breathe," Donaire said after the fight. "I could feel it in my back. It took a lot out of me."



Fortunately for Donaire, veteran southpaw Julio, 33-7-1 (28), was docked a point for a low blow in the fourth, and Donaire, also known as "The Filipino Flash," began to live up to his nickname and connect with sharp, quick right hands and left hooks in the seventh.

In the eighth and final round, Donaire twice dropped Julio with powerful left hooks and ultimately took a unanimous decision by a wide margin.

Pro Record

2001		
Feb. 22	Jose Lazaro, Inglewood, CA	KO 1
March 10	Rosendo Sanchez, Vallejo, CA	L 5
June 8	Salvador Santova, Inglewood	W 4
July 3	Jose Luis Torres, Monterey, CA	KO 1
2002		
May 31	Noel Alma, Paranaque, Philippines	KO 1
Sept. 1	Kaichon Sor Vorapin, Guam	KO 2
Nov. 2	Mark Sales, Taguig, Philippines	W 8
2003		
June 27	Jorge Lopez, Vallejo	KO 1
2004		
June 18	Ricardo Barrera, Montebello, CA	KO 4
Nov. 12	Gilberto Bolanos, Montebello	W 8
2005		
May 13	Paulino Villalobos, San Jose, CA	KO 6
July 2	Larry Olvera, Reno, NV	W 6
Oct. 1	Daniel Gonzalez, Reno	KO 1
Nov. 5	Ilido Julio, Stateline, NV	W 8

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
14	13	10	8	

Although he paid him no respect during the bout, the 34-year-old Colombian brawler had nothing but kind words for Donaire afterward, when he sought him out in the dressing room.

"He told me I was going to be a world champion," the 23-year-old Donaire said. "He said he had never fought anyone so strong and fast. He said that (115-pound titlist) Fernando Montiel was nothing compared to me. I guess he'd seen him fight. He put his thumbs up and said, 'You're good. You're good.'"

Donaire's talent was immediately apparent to his manager, Cameron Dunkin, who first spotted him in the 2000 Olympic Box-offs at the Tampa Convention Center, in Florida. Dunkin said both Donaire and his older brother, Glenn—now a flyweight with a record of 15-2 (9)—both deserved to win their respective fights with eventual 106-pound U.S. Olympian Brian Viloria (Nonito was the alternate), but the judges saw it differently.

"I thought Nonito was five, six, seven points ahead," said Dunkin, who signed the brothers in early-2005. "It was very controversial. He outboxed Viloria. Viloria was aggressive, rough, and throwing punches, and they gave it to him on aggression."

Although Donaire, who was born in Santos City, on Mindanao in the Philippines, and moved to San Leandro, California, in 1991, won several national junior titles and finished his amateur career with a reported record of 68-8, he didn't always look so promising.

(Continued on Page 77)

BOXING FIGHT POSTERS, PROGRAMS, ART PRINTS, T-SHIRTS, PHOTOS & AUTOGRAPHS

AUTOGRAPHED BOXING GLOVES
(Single Gloves, Guaranteed Authentic)

Roberto Duran or Michael Spinks ...$150.00 ea.
Joe Frazier or Jake LaMotta ...$175.00 ea.
Muhammad Ali ...$600.00
Marvin Hagler or Bernard Hopkins ...$150.00 ea.
Sugar Ray Leonard or Shane Mosley ...$125.00 ea.
Vinny Pazienza or Tommy Morrison ...$100.00 ea.
Mike Tyson ...$250.00
Larry Holmes or Arturo Gatti ...$125.00 ea.
Oscar de la Hoya or Roy Jones ...$195.00 ea.
Carmen Basilio or Vito Antuofermo ...$95.00 ea.
Archie Moore or Lennox Lewis ...$200.00 ea.
George Foreman or Evander Holyfield ...$325.00 ea.
Felix Trinidad or Fernando Vargas ...$175.00
Vinny Paz or Joey Gamache ...$75.00 ea.
Willie Pep or Kid Gavilan ...$175.00
Hector Camacho or Alexis Arguello ...$125.00

FIGHT PROGRAMS

ALI/MATHIS or ALI/LISTON II ...$400.00 ea.
ALI/COOPER II or ALI/LONDON ...$350.00 ea.
ALI/FOREMAN or ALI/BUGNER (Closed Circuits) ...$100.00 ea.
ALI/FRAZIER or ALI/INOKI (Closed Circuits) ...$150.00 ea.
ALI/FRAZIER or ALI/MILDENBERGER ...$1000.00 ea.
ALI/FRAZIER II or MARCIANO/CHARLES ...$500.00 ea.
ALI/FRAZIER III (Closed Circuit) ...$100.00
ALI/HOLMES or ALI/NORTON III ...$125.00 ea.
ALI/NORTON (warehouse find) Now just ...$75.00
ALI/NORTON II or ALI/YOUNG ...$600.00 ea.
ALI/QUARRY II or TYSON/GREEN ...$500.00 ea.
ALI/ROBINSON or BASILIO/DEMARCO ...$450.00 ea.
ALI/SPINKS (VG) or ALI/SPINKS II ...$250.00 ea.
BENN/MCCLELLAN or HAGLER/HAMSHO II ...$50.00 ea.
BOWE/GOLOTA I or II ...$35.00 ea.
CAMACHO/DURAN or CAMACHO/RAMIREZ ...$25.00 ea.
CAMACHO/ROSARIO, plus Tyson ...$50.00
CARBAJAL/GONZALEZ, Delahoya/J. Maywheather ...$50.00
CHAVEZ/CAMACHO or DELAHOYA/TRINIDAD ...$40.00 ea.
CHAVEZ/KAMAU or PAZ/LUCAS ...$10.00 ea.
CHAVEZ/MAYWHEATHER II or SAAD/BRAXTON ...$25.00 ea.
CHAVEZ/TAYLOR or CHAVEZ/RANDALL ...$35.00 ea.
DELAHOYA PRO DEBUT or MARCIANO/CHARLES II ...$500.00 ea
DELAHOYA/CHAVEZ II or DELAHOYA/CARR ...$30.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/GATTI or DELAHOYA/CHARPENTIER ...$25.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/QUARTEY or DELAHOYA/TYSON ...$45.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/MOSLEY or DELAHOYA/MOSLEY II ...$35.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/WHITAKER or HOLYFIELD/MOORER ...$45.00 ea.
DURAN/GONZALEZ '99 or FOREMAN/STEWART ...$45.00 ea.
FOREMAN/QAWI or VARGAS/QUARTEY ...$35.00 ea.
GATTI/ROBINSON II, VARGAS/CAMPAS ...$45.00
HAGLER/HEARNS or HAGLER/ROLDAN ...$66.00 ea.
HAGLER/MUGABI or HAGLER/OBEL ...$45.00 ea.
HAMED/KELLY or HAMED/BARRERA ...$40.00 ea.
HEARNS/BARKLEY I or II ...$35.00 ea.
HEARNS/HILL or HEARNS/ROLDAN ...$25.00 ea.
HOLMES/MERCER or LEONARD/CAMACHO ...$15.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/BOWE I, II or III ...$75.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/FOREMAN or HOLYFIELD/LEWIS ...$75.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/HOLMES or CAMACHO/HAUGEN II ...$35.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/LEWIS II or HOLYFIELD/RUIZ II ...$25.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/QAWI or PALOMINO/STRACY ...$150.00 ea.
ROY JONES PRO DEBUT or SANCHEZ/LOPEZ ...$600.00 ea.
JONES/DELVALLE or JONES/JOHNSON ...$30.00 ea.
JONES/GRIFFIN or HAMED/MCCOLLOUGH ...$25.00 ea.
LEONARD/DURAN or HEARNS/CUEVAS ...$125.00 ea.
LEONARD/DURAN II or ROSSMAN/GALINDEZ ...$50.00 ea.
LEONARD/HEARNS I or II ...$65.00 ea.
LEWIS/BRUNO or LEWIS/MCCALL ...$45.00 ea.
LEWIS/TUCKER or LEWIS/GOLOTA ...$30.00 ea.
LOUIS/SHARKEY or LOUIS/GALENTO ...$600.00 ea.
LOUIS/NOVA or ROBINSON/DOWNES ...$500.00 ea.
MANCINI/CAMACHO or PALOMINO/GREEN ...$75.00 ea.
MANCINI/CHACON or MANCINI/ESPANA ...$25.00 ea.
PAZIENZA/BURGESE & JONES JR./JOHNSON ...$60.00
PAZIENZA/DURAN I or II ...$25.00 ea.
PAZIENZA/JONES or PAZIENZA/GRAHAM ...$40.00 ea.
ROBINSON/TURPIN or DELAHOYA AMATUER ...$300.00 ea.
TYSON/FRANCIS or LEWIS/RUDDOCK ...$50.00 ea.
TYSON/BRUNO or TYSON/HOLMES ...$100.00 ea.
TYSON/HOLYFIELD I or II ...$20.00 ea.
TYSON/MCNEELEY or HAMED/SOTO ...$15.00 ea.
TYSON/SPINKS or TYSON/WILLIAMS ...$85.00 ea.
TYSON/SMITH or TYSON/SAVARESE ...$45.00 ea.
TYSON/STEWART or TYSON/TILLMAN ...$75.00 ea.
TYSON/TUBBS or TYSON/DOUGLAS ...$250.00 ea.
TYSON/BIGGS or TYSON/BRUNO II ...$80.00 ea.
TYSON/RIBALTA or TYSON/NELSON ...$1000.00 ea.

8 X 10 AUTOGRAPHED PHOTOS

MUHAMMAD ALI ...$500.00
OSCAR DELAHOYA or ROY JONES ...$80.00 ea.
JOE FRAZIER or FELIX TRINIDAD ...$85.00 ea.
LARRY HOLMES or ANDREW GOLOTA ...$45.00 ea.
MAX SCHMELING or ARCHIE MOORE ...$75.00 ea.
JAKE LAMOTTA or BEAU JACK (BW) ...$75.00 ea.
TIM WITHERSPOON or CARL WILLIAMS ...$20.00 ea.
JOHN RUIZ or ERNIE SHAVERS ...$25.00 ea.
WILLIE PEP or FERNANDO VARGAS ...$45.00 ea.
SUGAR RAY LEONARD or FLOYD PATTERSON ...$50.00 ea.
EMILE GRIFFITH or DANA ROSENBLATT ...$15.00 ea.
LENNOX LEWIS ...$85.00
CARMEN BASILIO or HECTOR CAMACHO ...$35.00 ea.
CARLOS PALOMINO or RAY MANCINI ...$35.00 ea.
SAAD MUHAMMAD or VINNY PAZ ...$25.00 ea.
MARVIN HAGLER or KID GAVILAN (BW) ...$75.00 ea.
EVANDER HOLYFIELD ...$100.00
MIKE TYSON ...$150.00
TOMMY MORRISON ...$65.00
KEN NORTON or MELDRICK TAYLOR ...$35.00 ea.
INGEMAR JOHANSSON or IRAN BARKLEY ...$20.00 ea.
ROBERTO DURAN or ARTURO GATTI ...$35.00 ea.

FIGHT T-SHIRTS

MUHAMMAD ALI • CAMACHO/DURAN • TYSON/HOLYFIELD '91
HECTOR CAMACHO • JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ • DELAHOYA/CARR
LEWIS/TYSON • CHAVEZ/CAMACHO • GATTI/MAYWEATHER
DELAHOYA/CHAVEZ II • DELAHOYA/GATTI • DELAHOYA/KAMAU
DELAHOYA/MOSLEY • DELAHOYA/MOSLEY - II • ALI/NORTON
DELAHOYA/QUARTEY • DELAHOYA/TRINIDAD • FELIX TRINIDAD
DELAHOYA/STURM-HOPKINS/ALLEN • DELAHOYA/VARGAS
DELAHOYA/WHITAKER • OSCAR DELAHOYA • ROBERTO DURAN
V. KLITSCHKO/SANDERS • HAGLER/HEARNS • MORALES/PACQUIAO
HOLYFIELD/HOLMES • HOLYFIELD/MOORER II • LEONARD/HEARNS
HOLYFIELD/RUIZ II • HOLYFIELD/STEWART • ROY JONES JR.
MERCER/MORRISON • MANCINI/HAUGEN • ROCKY MARCIANO
HOPKINS/DELAHOYA • JONES/GONZALEZ • LEONARD/DURAN II
LEONARD/DURAN III • MOSLEY/STONE • LEONARD/NORRIS
HAGLER/LEONARD • MAYWEATHER/HERNANDEZ • GATTI/DORIN
MAYWEATHER/RIOS • MORALES/BARRERA II • 92 OLYMPIC TRIALS
PAZIENZA/ROSENBLATT • IRON MIKE TYSON (XL Only)

***Just $18.00 each* (choose XL or L)**

GREAT MOMENTS IN BOXING

8"x10" B&W Action Photos — Just $4.50 ea.

- Robinson/LaMotta Fight
- Louis-Schmeling Battle
- Dempsey beats Willard
- Marciano slugs Lastarza
- Robinson beats Basilio
- Tunney/Dempsey Battle
- Sanchez/Lopez Battle
- Pep vs Saddler Fight
- Marciano's KOs Walcott
- Robinson slugs Gavilan
- Sanchez beats Gomez
- Ali floors Liston
- Hagler nails Hearns
- Leonard defeats Hearns
- Frazier upsets Ali
- Graziano - Zale classic
- Ali-Foreman Battle
- Marciano KO's Louis

8"x10" B&W Photos - Just $4.75 ea.

Ali • Basilio • Delahoya • Chavez • Corbett • Frazier
Dempsey • Duran • LaMotta • Leonard • J. Johnson
Jones Jr. • Louis • Marciano • Foreman • Hagler
Tyson • Sullivan • Robinson • Pep • Sanchez • Holyfield

8"x10" COLOR PHOTOS - $5.75 ea.

Ali • Delahoya • Hagler vs. Hearns • Mancini
Tyson v. Holyfield • Gatti • Duran • Foreman • LaMotta
Robinson • Hagler • Sanchez • Holyfield • Leonard
Leonard vs. Hearns • Lewis • Barrera • Morales
Ali vs. Frazier • Ali vs. Foreman • Ali KO's Liston
Marciano • Tyson • Jones Jr. • Hagler vs. Duran

BASEBALL CAPS - $17 EA:

GATTI/DORIN • CHAVEZ/DELAHOYA • TYSON/HOLYFIELD • MIKE TYSON
DELAHOYA/CAMACHO • GATTI/MAYWEATHER • TYSON/BERBICK
MOORER/FOREMAN • HAMED/BARERRA • DELAHOYA/RUELAS
PAZIENZA/DURAN • DELAHOYA/WHITAKER • HOPKINS/DELAHOYA
KLITSCHKO/SANDERS • HOLYFIELD/MOORER II • Team DURAN
DELAHOYA/MOSLEY • TYSON/HOLYFIELD II • JONES/GONZALEZ
DELAHOYA/QUARTEY • DELAHOYA/GATTI • TYSON/RUDDOCK II
JONES/PAZIENZA • OSCAR DELAHOYA • MORALES/BARRERA II
TYSON/BRUNO II • DELAHOYA/MOSLEY II • DELAHOYA/TRINIDAD
TYSON/SELDON • CORRALES/CASTILLO • MAYWEATHER/HERNANDEZ

FIGHT POSTERS

CLAY/LISTON (repro.) or ALI/FRAZIER III (Repro) ...$25.00 ea.
CLAY/LISTON (repro.) on Canvas 40" x 24" ...$250.00
ALI/FRAZIER I (LeRoy Neiman Poster) ...$600.00
ALI/FRAZIER I (Closed Circuit) POSTER ...$300.00
ALI/FRAZIER III (Closed Circuit) NEIMAN ...$125.00
ALI/HOLMES ...$125.00
ALI/FOREMAN (Closed Circuit) Poster ...$500.00
GATTI/MAYWEATHER or CHAVEZ/ROBINSON ...$10.00 ea.
BOWE/GOLOTA or BOWE/GOLOTA II ...$50.00 ea.
CAMACHO/ROSARIO or CHAVEZ/CAMACHO ...$75.00 ea.
CHAVEZ/DELAHOYA or CHAVEZ/ALI ...$10.00 ea.
CHAVEZ/RAMIREZ or CHAVEZ/MITCHELL ...$75.00 ea.
CHAVEZ/TAYLOR or CHAVEZ/TAYLOR II ...$35.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/HOPKINS (English or Spanish) ...$10.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/CAMACHO or DELAHOYA/RIVERA ...$20.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/CAMPANELLA, Jones/Tate ...$45.00
DELAHOYA/TRINIDAD ...$25.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/MOSLEY or DELAHOYA/MOSLEY II ...$30.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/VARGAS or DELAHOYA/GATTI ...$30.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/QUARTEY or DELAHOYA/CASTILLEJO ...$20.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/RUELAS or DELAHOYA/HERNANDEZ ...$25.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/WHITAKER or DELAHOYA/GONZALEZ ...$20.00 ea.
DELAHOYA/CHAVEZ II ...$50.00
DEMPSEY/TUNNEY II (Reproduction) ...$25.00
DURAN/BENITEZ or DURAN/CAMACHO ...$25.00 ea.
FOREMAN/GRIMSLEY or FOREMAN/MORRISON ...$30.00 ea.
FOREMAN/SAVARESE or HERNANDEZ/GERENA ...$5.00 ea.
HAGLER/DURAN or FOREMAN/COONEY ...$35.00 ea.
HAGLER/HEARNS or FOREMAN/MOORER ...$175.00
HAGLER/LEONARD or HAGLER/MUGABI ...$65.00 ea.
HAMED/BADILLO or HAMED/MOLINA ...$10.00 ea.
HAMED/CABRERRA or HAMED/HARDY ...$15.00 ea.
HAMED/JOHNSON or HAMED/VAZQUEZ ...$10.00 ea.
HEARNS/BARKLEY II or LAZARRAGA/MEDINA ...$10.00 ea.
HEARNS/HILL or HEARNS/ROLDAN ...$30.00 ea.
HOLMES/COONEY or HOLMES/SMITH ...$35.00 ea.
HOLMES/SHAVERS or HOLMES/M. SPINKS ...$30.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/BOWE or MORALES/PACQUIAO ...$25.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/BOWE III or LEONARD/CAMACHO ...$75.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/CZYZ or HOLYFIELD/FOREMAN ...$35.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/DOUGLAS ...$60.00
HOLYFIELD/HOLMES or HOLMES/MERCER ...$10.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/LEWIS ...$85.00
HOLYFIELD/MERCER or JONES/PAZIENZA ...$45.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/MOORER I or II ...$20.00 ea.
HOLYFIELD/RAHMAN or JONES/WOODS ...$25.00 ea.
HOPKINS/EASTMAN or BARRERA/AYALA ...$10.00 ea.
TYSON/GOLOTA or JONES/GRANT ...$35.00 ea.
JONES/GRIFFIN II or JONES/JOHNSON ...$20.00 ea.
JONES/HARDING or JONES/HARMON ...$25.00 ea.
JONES/GONZALEZ or MCCULLOUGH/ZARAGOSA ...$15.00 ea.
LEONARD/DURAN II ...$40.00
LEONARD/DURAN III or LEONARD/LALONDE ...$45.00 ea.
LEONARD/HEARNS I or II ...$40.00 ea.
LEWIS/GOLOTA or LEWIS/TUCKER ...$10.00 ea.
LEWIS/GRANT or LEWIS/BOTHA ...$30.00 ea.
LEWIS/RAHMAN or LEWIS/TYSON ...$25.00 ea.
MANCINI/CAMACHO or MORRISON/LEWIS ...$45.00 ea.
MANCINI/CHACON or PAZIENZA/DURAN II ...$20.00 ea.
MARCIANO/CHARLES (Theatre, folds) ...$750.00
MARCIANO/MOORE (Professionally Framed) ...$8,000.00
MARCIANO/WALCOTT (Reprint) or LEWIS/TUA ...$25.00 ea.
MAYWHEATHER/CORRALES or MAYWHEATHER/CASTILLO ...$20.00 ea.
MORALES/BARRERA II (English or Spanish) ...$20.00 ea.
MORALES/BARRERA III or MORALES/AYALA ...$10.00 ea.
MORALES/MCCULLOUGH or MORALES/RAMIREZ ...$5.00 ea
MORRISON/HIDE or SAVARESE/DOUGLAS ...$10.00 ea.
MORRISON/MERCER or MORRISON/RUDDOCK ...$35.00 ea.
MOSLEY/TAYLOR or MOSLEY/DIAZ ...$10.00 ea.
NELSON/HERNANDEZ or MORALES/BUENO ...$5.00 ea.
PAZIENZA/CAMACHO or PAZIENZA/DURAN ...$50.00 ea.
TAPIA/AYALA or PAZIENZA/ROSENBLATT ...$20.00 ea.
TRINIDAD/WHITAKER or TRINIDAD/PETTWAY ...$20.00 ea.
TRINIDAD/THIAM or TRINIDAD/VARGAS ...$35.00 ea.
TRINIDAD/CHERIFI or TRIPLE HITTER - Duran/Sims ...$30.00 ea.
TYSON/TUBBS or TYSON/BERBICK (LeRoy Neiman) ...$150.00 ea.
TYSON/BRUNO II or HOLYFIELD/BYRD ...$20.00 ea.
TYSON/DOUGLAS or TYSON/SMITH ...$225.00 ea.
TYSON/HOLMES or TYSON/BIGGS ...$35.00 ea.
TYSON/HOLYFIELD '96 or TYSON/SELDON ...$65.00 ea.
TYSON/HOLYFIELD II - 5/3/97 (Cancelled) or DELAHOYA/CARR ...$5.00 ea.
TYSON/HOLYFIELD II or MAYWHEATHER/C. HERNANDEZ ...$10.00 ea.
TYSON/RUDDOCK II or TYSON/SAVARESE ...$75.00 ea.
TYSON/STEWART or TYSON/FRANCIS ...$50.00 ea.
TYSON/TUCKER or TYSON/TILLMAN ...$45.00 ea.
IRON MIKE TYSON or SUGAR RAY LEONARD POSTER ...$15.00 ea.
HBO POSTER featuring 11 color photos of fights ...$5.00
Roger Clemens vs. Pedro Martinez BB Fight Poster ...$50.00

www.BobPace.com

Ordering Info.: Please include $7 P&H per package (Foreign Countries $15 per package ground or $25 air)

Send To: BOB PACE, 141 ROUTE ONE, Box 304, Rowley, MA 01969 or call w/AMEX, Disc., VISA or MC - (781) 284-4954

The $50 Question:

IS JERMAIN TAYLOR REALLY A PAY-PER-VIEW FIGHTER?

By David Mayo

Of the many truths Jermain Taylor exposed in 2005, his only wincing revelation was that winning every one does not mean winning everyone. It spoke directly to Taylor's future and ability that he came out of 24 knockdown-free rounds with Bernard Hopkins undefeated and undisputed, though the under-whelming nature of their two fights is solely Taylor's marketing burden to bear now that Hopkins' sales pitch and championship torch both are extinguished.

Taylor enjoys the credit of two victories over Hopkins and suffers the curiosity of those who saw him twice fight long and hard with a 40-year-old man. The fights were not memorable, nor even the individual rounds within them, and the split decision that ended the longest streak of successful middleweight defenses in history was soothed little by a close unanimous decision in Taylor's favor in the December 3 rematch at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor has all the middleweight belts (right) and a second decision win over Hopkins (opposite page), but due to the close and often boring nature of both fights, the new 160-pound champion isn't yet a major box-office attraction.

Two fights, two decisions, five scorecards to Taylor by the same 115-113 score, one scorecard to Hopkins in the first fight. That is the narrow line of separation between the aging ex-champion on his way out and the next big thing in the 160-pound division.

Taylor's long-term legacy grew with the victories, but what of his immediate career collateral? Middleweight history will be kinder to Taylor for the two narrow decisions than if he never had fought Hopkins, and ending a streak of 20 defenses validates the victories regardless of their nature. Yet now that he stands on his own two middleweight legs, without Hopkins' propping, Taylor's treatment of his own championship reign could test the level of good faith grown from those wins.

The anticipated quick parlay into the next big fight did not happen. Lou DiBella also played witness to the boxing truths Taylor exposed in 2005, including that the promoter's heavy investment in the 2000 Olympic class wasn't a complete pig-in-a-poke purchase. DiBella delighted in Taylor's victories over Hopkins, whom he calls "dishonest" and "ungrateful," and from whom he won a $610,000 slander judgment after their working relationship broke apart. Still, with a big fight looming for Taylor against Winky Wright after the second win over Hopkins, DiBella quickly announced that fight would not happen immediately.

Hopkins, whose hardball negotiating style led him down some peculiar financial paths, is in no position to question anyone's choice of opposition, though he may have hit upon a deeper question in doubting Taylor's ability to match his phenomenal career achievements.

"In 15 years, you can look back at his record, then look at my record, and that will tell you whether he was something special, because right now no one knows," Hopkins said. "I did enough to win both those fights and they were taken from me. Now he has to answer why he needed two highway robberies against a 40-year-old man to take his title. It's because the old warrior has proven he's special and the young lion hasn't."

Hopkins railed against the establishment with his typical paranoia, though if he felt haunted by sentiment throughout 2005 that boxing needed Taylor to beat him, it probably was justifiable. If Duane Ford had seen the 12th round of their July fight the way almost everyone else did, Taylor-Hopkins I might have been known as plain Hopkins-Taylor, no numeric designator, reigning-and-still champion's name listed first, after the fight ended in a draw.

Instead, the only way the final chapters of Hopkins' career could have been more disastrous is if he had beaten Taylor, retired THE RING champion, and sent boxing's second-most-popular division into alphabet-induced entropy.

The future health of the middleweight division needed a Taylor victory. It just needed a more impressive one. That Taylor ended up defeating Hopkins not once, but twice, and still lacks the consensus such a feat should have produced, is testimony to the lack of middleweight mandate spawned by his narrow electorate.

Boxing fans know Taylor is the future of the middleweight division. They simply

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

As in the first Taylor-Hopkins match, there was way too much grabbing and wrestling in the lackluster rematch. This is not the sort of contest that encourages pay-per-view customers to come back, especially at $50 a pop.

would have been more satisfied if he had vanquished the past more conclusively.

DiBella seemed to sense it soon after the fight when he suggested no immediate interest in pursuing the most obvious challenger, and Wright failed to force the issue with his lackluster decision victory over Sam Soliman one week after Taylor-Hopkins II. The two fights were timed so the replay of the Taylor-Hopkins II pay-per-view would appear on the same HBO telecast as Wright-Soliman, though Wright's surprisingly difficult 12-round decision over Soliman did little to heighten clamor for Taylor-Wright.

DiBella seized on the opportunity when he declared the Taylor-Wright fight needed more build-up time. That sparked a word skirmish between DiBella and Gary Shaw, for obvious reasons: DiBella, with the 26-year-old Taylor coming off two tough fights against Hopkins, understandably would prefer an easier next first; Shaw, who promotes the 34-year-old Wright, wants the Taylor fight immediately.

"I don't know what they're talking about with this need-more-time stuff," Wright said. "I want to fight Jermain. I haven't made any bones about it. But I'm not going to wait around for years while they try to make up their minds. Bernard was 40 before Jermain was ready to fight him. How old will I be before Jermain is ready to fight me? It's time to come to the negotiating table and get this fight made."

Getting the 25-0 (17) Taylor to the negotiating table cannot possibly be the stumbling block it was during Hopkins' middleweight rule. Even after Hopkins defeated Felix Trinidad to unify the title, he flatly declined a $6-million offer for a rematch with Roy Jones, only to have that reluctance justified in his $9-million win over De La Hoya.

Hopkins seethed that he lost money by fighting the lesser-known Taylor and forfeiting his own pay-per-view plans with Wright in Taylor-Hopkins I. He compared that first decision to rape and suggested the 12th-round idiosyncrasy on Ford's scorecard was the fulfillment of a preordained plan.

"They gave him a throne. They anointed him for it," Hopkins said of Taylor. "Let the years tell his story. He can't even begin to understand what it is like when every fight is a championship fight, every fighter is bringing his A-game, and he has to reach down against every opponent."

Reaching down against Hopkins carries its own inherent risks. It is possible

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Winky Wright catches the onrushing Sam Soliman with a right en route to a 12-round decision in a bout that took place a week after Taylor-Hopkins II. Logically, Wright should get the next shot at Taylor, but the champ's promoter, Lou DiBella, is looking for an easier match for the star of his stable.

that Taylor simply won the fight the best way he could, perhaps even the only way he could. Remember, in their first fight, it was Taylor who got the worse of the defining 11th round. The 11th also may have been the most memorable round of the rematch, if such a thing existed, except Taylor scored with some heavy shots the second time, which was an encouraging progression.

"Most people don't understand how hard it is just to hit Bernard Hopkins," Taylor said. "He's so smart and so crafty, and his defense is so good, that it's hard just to land a shot. You just have to keep working hard and take your opportunities as they come, because he isn't going to give you any.

"I know I've gotten some criticism for not pressing the fight and trying for a knockout. I think it's totally ridiculous. If knocking out Bernard Hopkins is such an easy thing to do, why didn't Roy Jones do it? If beating Bernard Hopkins is such an easy thing to do, why didn't Oscar De La Hoya or Felix Trinidad do it? I'm proud of what I've done. I've beaten Bernard Hopkins twice, and I'm looking forward to dominating my division for years to come. To me, the whole plan is coming together."

Remember, Hopkins wasn't always the most marketable fighter in the history of the 160-pound class. From the time he lost to Jones in 1993 until he defeated Trinidad in 2001, Hopkins' best-known opponent was Simon Brown. He ended up in personal and/or financial and/or legal disputes with every promoter he did business with until aligning with Golden Boy Promotions at the end of his career.

Even in what might have been the final fight of his career, controversial business dealings crossed into Hopkins' closest boxing relationship. Hopkins started working with trainer Bouie Fisher after losing his professional debut in 1988. Fisher did not work Hopkins' corner for the Taylor rematch, and was

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Naturally, Hopkins, pictured connecting with a flush left jab, thought he should have been given the nod in the rematch. But despite the closeness of both of his bouts with Taylor, there is little or no public demand for a third fight between them.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

"Most people don't understand how hard it is just to hit Bernard Hopkins," said Taylor, pictured lunging in with a long left that Hopkins easily avoided. Taylor makes a good point, but excuses, regardless of whether they are valid or not, won't attract paying customers.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Hopkins gets some advice from Nazim Richardson, who trained him for the second Taylor fight, after B-Hop parted with long-time trainer Bouie Fisher. We'll never know if having Fisher in the corner would have made any difference.

replaced by Nazim Richardson. Hopkins said Fisher's health prohibited the two from working together for the rematch, but Fisher said their differences were monetary.

Pat Burns, who trains Taylor, was stunned not to see his septuagenarian training rival back in the opposite corner.

"I don't know what happened between Hopkins and Bouie, and apparently they don't agree on what happened either, but their split is surprising, even for Hopkins," Burns said. "Hopkins has destroyed almost every meaningful long-term relationship he had in this sport. The relationship with Bouie may be the last one he has left."

The grudge-laden steadfastness that earned Hopkins 2004 Manager of the Year recognition for his successful pursuit of De La Hoya also would short-circuit his comeback plans, if any existed. Hopkins turned 41 in January, and while the status of his promise to his dying mother not to fight at that age was undetermined at press time, his viability as a desirable and marketable middleweight was unraveled.

The 46-4-1 (32) Hopkins, who proudly did things his way, could get away with that self-centered approach as long as he was undisputed champion with a record streak of defenses, but now would have to exercise a certain level of subservience to regain that world stage.

That's unlikely. Hopkins toiled much of his championship career in off-Broadway productions against such opponents as Morrade Hakkar and Joe Lipsey. He became a pay-per-view attraction beginning with his upset of Trinidad, at age 36, and continuing only for major fights against De La Hoya and Taylor.

When Hopkins tested himself just beyond his outer limits of age and competition level, he set himself back in a line of challengers he may have lost interest in fighting through, yet also did enough to dispel any notions that he is far removed from beating the young champion even now.

A third fight, barring Hopkins overstaying his welcome in the ring, will not happen. Taylor has two decision victories, no matter how similarly unappealing. DiBella has his revenge. Hopkins either wasn't quite strong enough or no longer could summon that fifth gear against Taylor—or both—which leaves Wright as the most-desired middleweight challenger now.

After 24 rounds, Taylor showed enough against Hopkins that the boxing public no longer desires to see more of them together. The question is how the public clamors for Taylor when separated from Hopkins, and allowed to fight independently for his own middleweight mantle. The rematch attracted approximately 410,000 PPV buys, which was around 40,000 more buys than their first fight. But without Hopkins in the other corner, Taylor's next PPV bout is unlikely to do as well.

"The only limit on Jermain's future is there are more pay-per-fights than there are pay-per-view fighters," said Emanuel Steward, the Hall of Fame trainer and HBO analyst. "Jermain has some pay-per-view fights in his immediate future, but that doesn't make him a pay-per-view fighter. Mike Tyson was a pay-per-view fighter because of his fury. Oscar had the whole package of ability and charm. Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera became such forces in their fights that they became pay-per-view fighters, even against other opponents. But Roy Jones and Pernell Whitaker never became big pay-per-view attractions, even though they were pound-for-pound best in the sport during their careers.

"For Jermain to cross over, he has to take some chances and win impressively. Fans who are paying $50 to watch a fight on television believe they deserve that. On the other hand, Jermain was just trying to win those fights any way he could, against the man who dominated his era in the middleweight division. I think fans will forgive that because it was Bernard Hopkins. But if it becomes routine, Jermain will have a hard time creating that 'wow' factor that makes him marketable against any opponent."

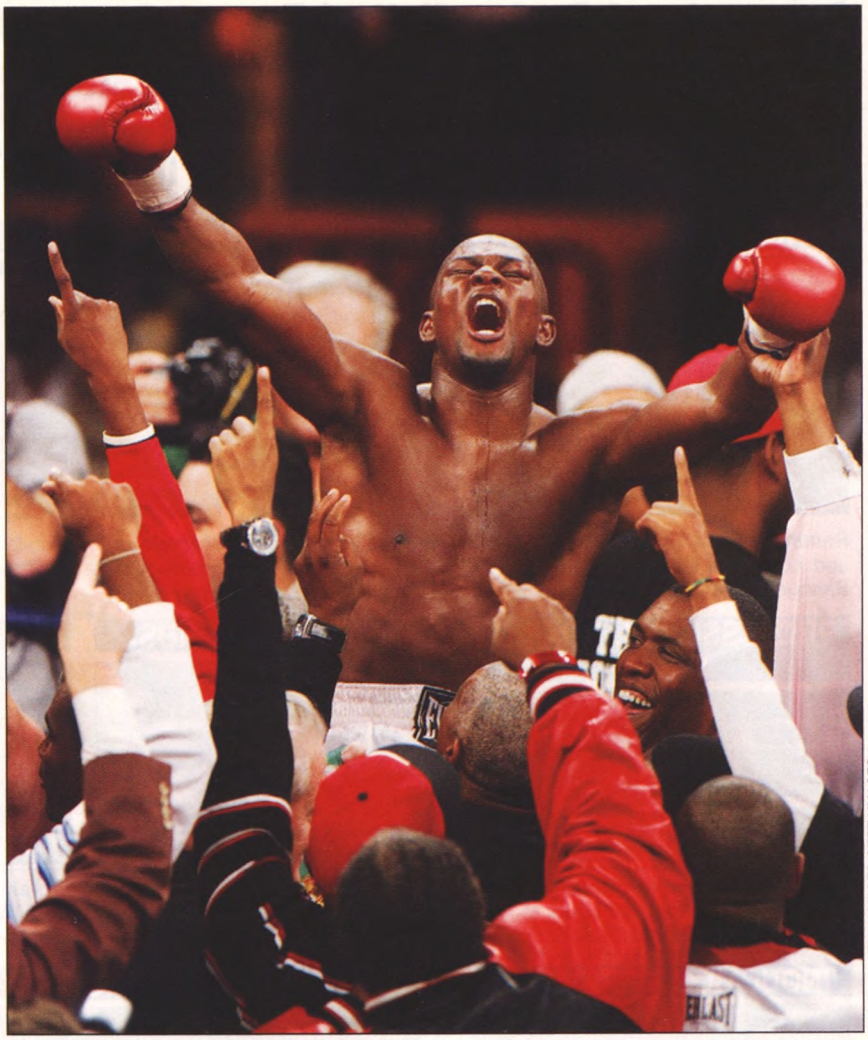


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Sweet relief: Taylor looks overjoyed after hearing that he's retained the middleweight title via unanimous decision. He now has 19 more to go to equal Hopkins' division record of 20 successful defenses.

The pay-per-view emergence of both Taylor and Wright still is relatively new, and previously reliant on bigger-name opponents. But if selling their fight beyond the hardcore boxing public seems something of a market risk, try getting a "wow" out of Taylor versus Artur Abraham, Felix Sturm, or Kelly Pavlik.

Boxing has its new middleweight era. What its champion does with that limited window of opportunity in pursuit of winning every one, and winning everyone, falls on only one. Undefeated and undisputed merely whet public appetite for pushing the limits, another unfettered truth uncovered in 2005—and now life as Jermain Taylor knows it. ■

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

International Boxing Hall of Fame - Canastota, New York I ♥ NY

ANNUAL INDUCTION WEEKEND JUNE 8-11, 2006

★ A Championship Weekend in Boxing's Hometown ★

BANQUET OF CHAMPIONS

Reminiscing . . . Livingstone Bramble and Lou Duva share fight stories with Banquet crowd.

FIST CASTING

Everlasting . . . Fist cast by Diego Corrales.

PARADE OF CHAMPIONS

Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.

Hooray . . . Grand Marshal Ryan O'Neal enjoys fans along Parade route.

PROFESSIONAL BOXING SHOW

Fight Night . . . Popular boxers featured in action-packed bouts at Turning Stone Resort & Casino.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Autographs . . . George Foreman spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . Barry McGuigan showing fans his Induction Certificate.

BOXING CARD SHOW

A Collector's Dream . . . Boxing memorabilia for fans. The world's only all-boxing show draws collectors from throughout the world.

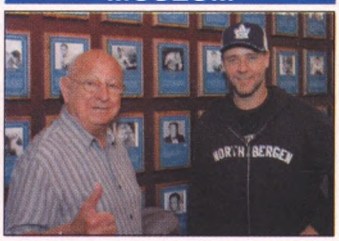
GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM



Angelo Dundee and actor Russell Crowe tour the museum together.

WORKOUTS

Juan Diaz works the bag mitts during daily public workouts.

RINGSIDE TALKS

Stanley Christodoulou reviews referee rules for the fans.

Yes! Please send me a brochure of the Schedule of Events and ticket information

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

The Showplace of Boxing
CANASTOTA, NY
BOXING HALL OF FAME

Int'l Boxing Hall of Fame
PO Box 425 • Canastota, NY 13032
Call: 315-697-7095
or Fax: 315-697-5356
www.ibhof.com
Madison County Tourism 1-800-684-7320

YEAR-END SPECTACULAR!

THE BEST OF 2005

Compiled by Nigel Collins, Joe Santoliquito, Eric Raskin, William Dettloff, & Brian Doogan

If further proof were needed of boxing's contradictory nature, 2005 surely provided it. It was a year that saw a handful of truly great fights, the ascension of an immense talent to the top of the pound-for-pound pile, and the debut of a primetime television series that garnered the Sweet Science more mainstream attention than it has received in years. It was also a year in which its best fight ended in controversy, several longstanding icons were punched into marginal status, and the reigning heavyweight champion abruptly retired, leaving the sport's glamour division a leaderless morass of mediocrity.

In other words, a typical 12 months for boxing, featuring the sort of melodramatic and often contrary ups and downs that have made prizefighting one of mankind's most intriguing pastimes.

Moreover, a geographical shift that began after the breakup of the former Soviet Union took on a greater dimension in 2005. Although four of the seven reigning RING world champions are from the United States, '05 saw an increasing number of European-based fighters shoot up the rankings. Heading this group are junior welter champion Ricky Hatton (England) and cruiserweight king Jean-Marc Mormeck (France), but they're just the tip of the iceberg. Five of the top 10 cruiserweights are Europeans, as are four of the top 10 super middleweights, and five of the top 10 middleweights. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that for the first time since 1968 a European boxer took top honors for the year.

In another of boxing's peculiar ironies, despite their success at home, the majority of boxers from outside of the United States can't wait to fight here. Even Hatton, a boxer capable of filling virtually any venue in Great Britain, wants to see if he can be just as popular on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Television provided an additional paradox in '05, when Showtime, which has a much smaller budget than HBO, provided us with superior fights to those broadcast by its richer rival. But what does Showtime do to celebrate its excellent year? It fires Jay Larkin, the individual most responsible for the high quality of its boxing programming.

Like so many things in this strange and wonderful world, boxing frequently defies logic, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Logic tells us that without a dominant heavyweight champion, the sport is in for a difficult time in 2006. But if '05 was any indication, the new year is guaranteed to bring plenty of welcome surprises—and perhaps even that new heavyweight hero we crave. But before we plunge bravely into the future, it's time to celebrate the best of the past.

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

RICKY HATTON

Hatton, blood streaming down his face, clobbers Maussa with a left hook (above) en route to a ninth-round kayo victory, capping an incredible year that saw the Englishman emerge as the undisputed junior welterweight champion and THE RING's 2005 Fighter of the Year. A few days after beating Maussa, Hatton showed THE RING championship belt he won by beating Tszyu to his buddy, Marco Antonio Barrera, during a visit to Las Vegas.

PHOTO BY RAY SPENCER

By Brian Doogan

PHOTOS BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

It was dark and silent as Ricky Hatton gazed down Rock Street, stretching and shadow boxing by the front door of his home on the outskirts of Manchester. His demeanor was cheerful as he inhaled into his lungs the cool, crisp air, his mind completely unburdened by the masterly inquisitor he would soon be facing.

"I have some fun planned for tonight," he said, his eyes and feet dancing mischievously as he set off on his 2 a.m. run. "See, this time of night, I'm usually in my prime."

Only a few nights before, as he ran along Stockport Road, a taxi-load of his mates, all of them "steaming drunk," drew up on their way home from a nightclub in Stalybridge. "Want a lift, Ricky lad? Climb in. The night's not over yet," they cried out, dropping their trousers and sticking their backsides out of the windows as the taxi crept past. Hatton vowed that he would get them back.

"One morning last week I was right along here—I had the hood up on my jacket—and a police car pulled up alongside me," Hatton said, breathing evenly, maintaining his stride, and throwing punches in impulsive bursts. "The officer got out and said, 'Excuse me, mate. Do you mind me asking what you're doing?' When I stopped and turned around he recognized me. 'Sorry, Ricky,' he said. 'I should have known it was you. Who else would be out running at two in the morning?'

"Everyone knows when I'm not fighting that I like to

let my hair down and enjoy myself by downing a few pints. But when I go into training, this is all I do. I've been running or going to the gym at 2 a.m. because this is when the fight will be. I want to get my body clock adjusted. But it takes a bit of getting used to. The first morning I was out running, a fox came tearing out of a field and scampered right across my path. I was back home in record time, I can tell you. A couple of mornings later, I saw this plane flying past and I was convinced it was a UFO. I'm still convinced, I think. That morning I set another record. The first few mornings were a bit unnerving, no cars, no people, just silence mostly. And the mind can play tricks at this kind of hour."

Hatton had a trick or two to play himself. As he turned into the Hattersley estate, where he grew up and where many of his friends still live, he stopped at a succession of houses and started banging loudly on doors and windows until the occupants were awake and cursing him. "Come on, you so-and-so's, rise and shine," he shouted before moving on. By the time he returned home—where a message had been left on his phone by one of his mates whom he had just awakened "I hope that Russian knocks your head off"—he was almost in hysterics.

"They won't be shoving their arses out the window of a cab at me again," he said and laughed. He was still laughing an hour later as he climbed the stairs and went off to bed. His fight with Kostya Tszyu, one of boxing's most feared and long-standing world champions, was just 11 days away.

***

Working-class, a member of the darts team at his local pub, the New Inn, a passionate fan and season ticket-holder at Manchester City, the football club he has supported since he was a kid, the club that his father and grandfather both

HONORABLE MENTION

At the end of 2004 there were still plenty of doubts surrounding **Jeff Lacy.** Sure, he was unbeaten and held the IBF super middleweight belt. But in his final fight of '04, he'd been taken the distance and given a much tougher fight than anticipated by Omar Sheika, which seemed to indicate that Lacy was still a rung of two below the division elite. All that changed in 2005 when "Left Hook" reeled off three impressive victories, stopping Rubin Williams, former WBC 168-pound titleholder Robin Reid, and Scott Pemberton. Now Lacy is poised to battle Joe Calzaghe on March 4, 2006, for the vacant world title.

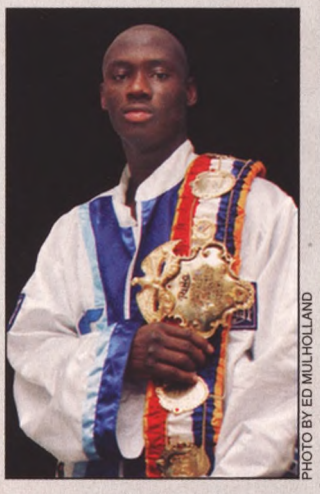


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Tarver regained The Ring light heavyweight belt in 2005

Normally, twice beating a long-stand champion and future Hall of Famer would be enough to garner top honor, but while **Jermain Taylor**'s pair of points victories over Bernard Hopkins to capture and retain the middleweight title were highly significant, the margins of victory were so slender and the quality of the fights so mediocre, the best we could give Taylor was honorable mention.

After cementing his standing as the true junior middleweight champion with two decision wins over Shane Mosley in '04, **Winky Wright** relinquished the 154-pound title in '05 and launched a successful middleweight campaign. First, he dominated Felix Trinidad over 12 one-sided rounds, sending "Tito" back into retirement, and then fought off a stubborn Sam Soliman to position himself for a crack at the 160-pound title.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

Stopping Reid highlighted Lacy's outstanding year

It took longer than we originally thought, but **Zab Judah** finally lived up to his vast potential in '05, winning the world welterweight title by stopping previous conqueror Cory Spinks and then successfully defending with a kayo of outclassed Cosme Rivera.

Both **Diego Corrales** and **Jose Luis Castillo** covered themselves in glory in their unforgettable first fight, which Corrales won by a surreal, 10th-round TKO. The rematch wasn't as protracted, but was fiercely fought until Castillo ended matters with a single left hook to the jaw in the fourth. Either man may have been Fighter of the Year had it not been for the controversy surrounding both bouts: Corrales twice spit out his mouthpiece as he went down in their first fight, gaining additional time to recover. In the rematch, Castillo failed to make weight, which made it a non-title bout and gave the Mexican an unfair advantage.

Antonio Tarver started the year well, regaining the light heavyweight title by outboxing Glen Johnson over 12 fairly entertaining rounds. He followed up with his second victory over Roy Jones, but their rubber match was a tepid, 12-round affair that somewhat dampened a fine year for the "Magic Man."

WBA flyweight king **Lorenzo Parra** enjoyed an excellent year, defending the belt three times in enemy territory, winning a trio of 12-round unanimous decisions over Trash Kakanuma and Takefumi Sakata in Japan, and Brahim Asloum in France.

played for and where he once went for trials himself, these are Hatton's points of reference, the defining features of one of the most appealing characters in British sport. When he trains in the old, converted hat factory, which also houses a gym full of Manchester's most fanatical bodybuilders, he regularly attracts a throng of people including actors and athletes, footballers and writers and, tellingly, the friends he grew up with on the Hattersley Estate, a place made infamous in the 1960s by the series of child murders committed by Ian Brady and Myra Hindley.

"It's a tough area, but a good area, and I've got the same friends now that I've always had and always will have," said Hatton, sitting in the games room of his home and reflecting on the most extraordinary year of his life, a year in which he has reached the pinnacle of his profession while his personality has not changed one bit. "I live just five minutes away from the council estate I grew up on and 45 seconds round the corner from my mum and dad. I figured last year that it was

RICKY HATTON THE YEAR THAT WAS

Five fighters stood between Ricky Hatton and the mountaintop throne of world junior welterweight king Kostya Tszyu in THE RING*'s ratings a year ago, but with one giant leap, the 26-year-old "Hitman" from Manchester scaled the most challenging summit in boxing.*

Hatton had closed 2004 with a dominant display over Ray Oliveira, becoming the first man to stop the Massachusetts veteran. His message for Tszyu in the immediate aftermath was, "Bring him on," but the sages wondered anew whether the Australian-based Russian, a conqueror in the mold of Genghis Khan, a ruthless warrior whose mantra reads vincit qui se vincit *(he conquers who conquers himself), represented a step too far. Maybe a fight with Sharmba Mitchell, whom Tszyu had recently destroyed in three rounds, or a shootout with Arturo Gatti would be more prudent. Yes, Hatton was unbeaten in 38 bouts, but the jury was still out on the true meaning of all of these wins. Was he really ready to climb Everest and preside over the toughest division in pugilism?*

Hatton ultimately proved too strong for Tszyu

"I knew what the whispers were. I could hear people taking snipes: 'Yeah, Ricky's unbeaten and all, but when is he going to be in a real fight?' I knew there was only one way to respond," revealed Hatton. "Kostya Tszyu was the fighter I'd set my sights on for years because he was the champion, the man you had to beat to prove you're number one. I never doubted that I could beat him because, despite what people might have thought, I've always known what I'm capable of and I'm afraid of no one. That night in Manchester I'll remember for the rest of my life."

So will anyone who was there to experience it. In the emotional atmosphere that was generated by 22,000 partisan fans at two o'clock on the morning of June 5, Hatton pulled off one of the great triumphs of British boxing history, and his defense over Carlos Maussa cemented his right to the distinction of becoming the first British fighter ever to be named THE RING*'s Fighter of the Year. No other fighter in the past 12 months came close to rivaling his achievements. "Ricky's a great champion, a great fighter," said Marco Antonio Barrera, who came to watch him beat Maussa in Sheffield, a man indisputably qualified to judge the true meaning of Hatton's 40 wins.*

KO 11 Kostya Tszyu, Manchester, England, June 5 2005: An occasion to rival any that had taken place before in a British ring: Randolph Turpin against Sugar Ray Robinson, Henry Cooper against Muhammad Ali, Barry McGuigan against Eusebio Pedroza. Some of the tickets that sold out inside two hours had fetched around $3,500 on the black market.

Hatton produced the performance of a lifetime, which reverberated inside the cauldron-like MEN Arena and halfway round the world back to Kostya Tszyu's hometown of Sydney. "Blue Moon," the anthem of Hatton's beloved Manchester City, rang around the arena, sung by 22,000 people and never with such pride.

The electricity that flowed throughout the building fed Hatton's intensity as he arrived in the ring, pumped up as he had never been before. Repeatedly, he thumped his right hand into his chest. When Tszyu, 31-2 (25) with 1 no-contest, emerged into what promoter Frank Warren described as "the lion's den," he skipped over the top rope and raised his right fist in defiance. But Hatton attacked him like a man possessed, the intense pressure he exerted negating Tszyu's most devastating weapon, his strong straight right. Hatton's jab was strong and he used his physical strength to put Tszyu on the back foot. The ferocity of his assault appeared to take Tszyu by surprise. After two rounds of fierce, close-quarter engagement the aggressive Hitman had established an early lead.

Tszyu landed his right hand with damaging effect for the first time in the third, but Hatton took the punch well. He also withstood another right hand and a left hook to the body. Significantly, Hatton had allowed a dangerous distance to develop, room for the Australian to fire his most dangerous shots.

By the fourth round, it was a battle of attrition. Hatton's pace had dropped and Tszyu's jabs carried real menace. But

time I moved out of my parents' box room. But if I stood in my back garden and my mum stood in hers, honestly, we could have a conversation—and sometimes we do. Despite everything that's changed in my life, I'm still the same person and I'll always be this way and it would kill me if people ever thought different. I'm not a flash Harry. I'm no different to anyone else. I still shop at the local Tesco's and drink with my mates at the New Inn, the pub my dad had for eight years.

"The day after I beat Kostya, I was there for what we call our 'sh_t shirt day,' the idea being that people have to wear the worst shirt possible. This is just the way I am. I still look on myself as a little kid from Hattersley and I'll never change."

The influences of his youth are simply too ingrained. He was 14 the night he was taken by his uncles, Ged and Paul, to Manchester's Old Trafford stadium to sit with 40,000 people and watch the second fight between Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank. "That night I'd never have believed that years later so many people would come out in support of me," he

every time he was caught, Hatton fired back, and he landed a good left hook to the body and right hand to the champion's jaw. His own jaw was tested too, as he began to get caught with ominous regularity by solid rights as he charged in.

Tszyu was feeling the pace by the fifth and sixth rounds. Hatton caught him with a left hook that drove Tszyu into the ropes. A powerful right to the jaw shook him clearly in the seventh. Tszyu's retaliation was a low blow that dropped Hatton. Referee Dave Parris gave him time to recover before he sought his own retribution, firing in a hard left hook well below the belt line.

Hatton was beginning to pick his punches better than Tszyu, and he had taken enough hard shots on his chin to dispel any doubts about his punch resistance. In the 10th he took charge, walking straight through a big left hook at the start of the round before firing a steady succession of heavy, accurate blows. An overhand right and two right uppercuts really damaged the champion, who was suffering now, with Hatton gloriously ascendant.

Maussa was difficult, but still lasted less than nine rounds

It all became too much for Tszyu in the 11th. A right-left-right combination and two right uppercuts drained whatever was left from his body. When the bell rang for the start of the 12th round, Tszyu could not rise from his stool. His trainer, Johnny Lewis, signaled to the referee, who stopped the fight, bringing to an end one of the most incredible fights ever waged in a British ring.

KO 9 Carlos Maussa, Sheffield, England, November 26 2005: Surviving several crises and sometimes-questionable tactics employed by his Colombian opponent, Hatton recorded a devastating ninth-round knockout victory before a packed house of 12,000 at Sheffield's Hallam FM Arena. The 26-year-old Hitman was desperate to put on a performance worthy of the occasion—and did.

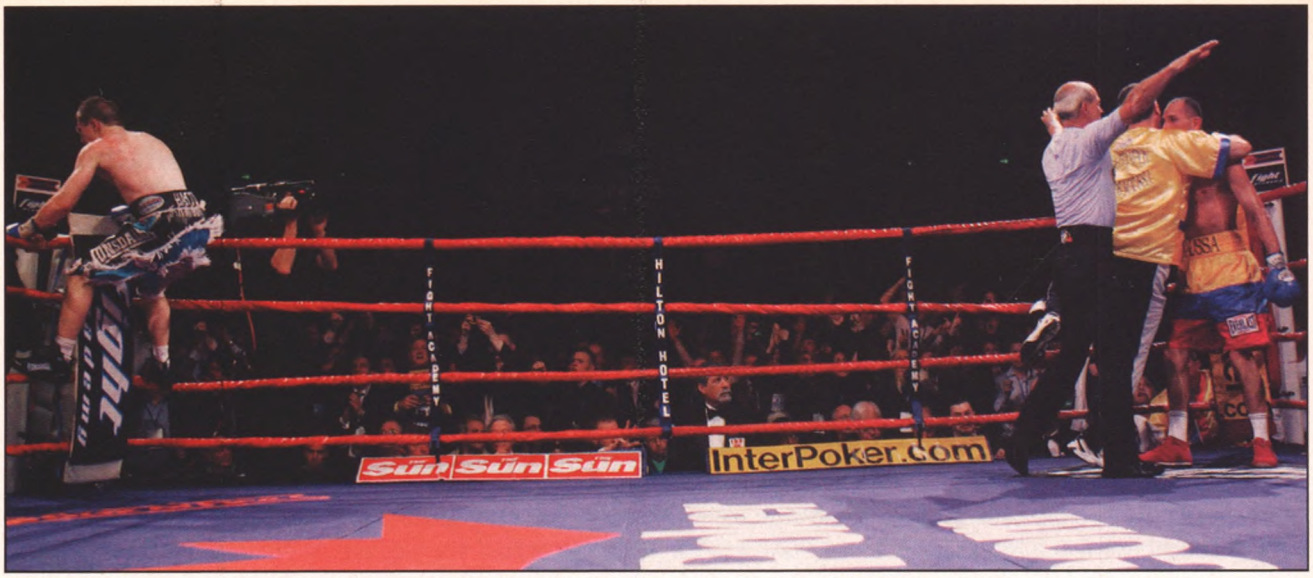
It proved a tough assignment from the first bell, as Hatton believed it would be. Maussa's reputation as a tough man was well-merited, one of only two defeats coming against Miguel Cotto, and in his previous fight he had wrested the WBA junior welterweight title away from Vivian Harris. Within a minute he had managed to open a dangerous cut over Hatton's left eye with a headbutt. But far from being disheartened, the injury drove Hatton on. Relentlessly, he bullied Maussa around the ring, landing a hard left hook in the first that hurt the Colombian. Tall and gangly, Maussa was awkward and dirty, and in the third round he opened a second cut on Hatton's face, this time around his right eye. Again it seemed that a clash of heads might have done the damage.

Hatton did not attack Maussa's body as might have been expected, but targeted his head most of the way. "I was trying too hard and got cut badly because I wasn't as controlled as I should have been," admitted Hatton. "The red mist descended. I felt in my mind that I was winning the fight, but it wasn't easy and I wasn't boxing to my full potential."

Hatton was not panicked by the cuts. In his corner, Mick Williamson did a terrific job patching him up, and slowly but surely Maussa began to wilt under Hatton's increasingly accurate and debilitating assault. Staying on top of his opponent, Hatton smothered him and piled on the punches. A solid right hand, the punch with which Hatton had considerable success in the early going, staggered Maussa in the fifth, and Hatton landed with the same punch again at the bell that ended the round. Hatton was remorseless and it was all starting to take a heavy toll.

Two straight left hands softened him up some more in the seventh and Maussa was clearly near the end. As he collapsed onto his stool at the end of the round, he appeared to have little left. His right eye closed completely in the eighth and he was dangerously vulnerable to Hatton's left hook, two of which forced Maussa to hold for dear life at the end of the eighth. But nothing could save him in the ninth. Two left hooks and a right hand set up the coup de grace, a savage left hook to Maussa's jaw. The Colombian fell onto his knees in his own corner where referee Mickey Vann counted him out at the 1:10 mark.

—BD



Hatton jumps for joy as referee Mickey Vann and one of Maussa's cornermen stop the fight in the ninth round. But before Hatton prevailed, he suffered a nasty eye cut, thanks to the challenger's wayward head, that required plastic surgery.

said of the impassioned, 22,000-strong crowd that filled the MEN Arena, the largest indoor arena in Europe, on the night he beat Tszyu, selling out the place quicker than when Mike Tyson fought in Manchester in 2000, quicker even than for the Achtung Baby tour stop made by U2. The epitome of northern England working-class pride, Hatton has struck a chord with the British public. Stars of the England football team are regular attendees at his fights, while actors and other celebrities feel compelled to be at ringside.

"The way everything's taken off, the way people have got behind me, it's hard for me to comprehend," Hatton revealed with mild bemusement. "When I look at THE RING championship belt, I can hardly believe it, I can hardly believe it's mine, and now to be Fighter of the Year as well, it's just incredible. A couple of years ago, Kevin Keegan, who was then the manager of Manchester City, was in the hospital recovering from a bad back and his assistant, Arthur Cox, asked me to come into the dressing room before a league match against Fulham to gee up the lads. Imagine that, being asked into the dressing room to gee up the lads before a match, a diehard City supporter! And if you'd ever told me that the Manchester City manager now (Keegan's successor, Stuart Pearce) would actually be coming into my dressing room before my fights, that he'd be a mate, I'd never have believed it."

Hatton's popularity is rooted in his down-to-earth personality. On Thursday nights he plays on the darts team for the New Inn, where he still comes to drink his mates under the table, to sing "Suspicious Minds" on karaoke night, to doll himself up to look like Spice Girl Geri Haliwell on fancy dress day. His father, Ray, who now manages the business side of his career, trained him as a carpet-fitter after he left school, but when he found him on the job one day, having sliced through three of his fingers, Ray knew he would have to find something safer for the older of his two sons to do. He made him a salesman.

"He was crap at that, too," Ray recalled with a smile, "selling the carpet at cost price, making no profit whatsoever. But that's just Richard's nature (at home Hatton is known by the name he was christened), to be nice to people, to be polite. That's the way he was brought up to be."

He has always liked to party, too, and even now, when he is out of training, he is neither temperate nor vain.

"I took part in Superstars last year in the Spanish resort of La Manga, and I was in dreadful shape," admitted Hatton, who can balloon to over 40 pounds above his 140 pounds fighting weight between fights, through binge drinking and enjoying his food. "There were people there who had brought their own personal physio and there was another group of people who were there to have a laugh but took the competition seriously. Then there was a small, select bunch who plainly didn't give a hoot. Needless to say which group I was in. I knew I was in trouble when I made a good start in the 100 meters and about 10 strides in (former West Indies cricket captain) Richie Richardson went flying past me on the outside. I wouldn't mind, but Richie's about 66 years old!

"There are times I've turned up to the gym 2½ stones (35 pounds) overweight and I've taken off my T-shirt and my trainer, Billy Graham's gone, 'For God's sake, put it back on,' because my gut's spilling out over my shorts! But that's the way I am. Sometimes I shouldn't go as mad as I do between fights, but for me it takes that blowout after a fight, that full-belly feeling that tells me I've had a good time, to push myself back into training. The camp I had for the fight with Kostya was my longest ever, 14 weeks. The shape I was in, I felt like I was bursting at the seams. I couldn't have been more ready. I knew that in the last five years, no one had taken him into the trenches or forced him to dig deep, and I knew I'd take him there. I wasn't frightened of him and I wasn't in awe of the occasion, and I don't think he expected that.

"But what a marvelous champion and great man. I went to his hotel on the Monday after the fight, before he left to fly back home to Australia, and we talked about our families and signed souvenirs for one another, and not once did we

mention the fight. I gave him a small porcelain statue of me in fighting pose and he gave me a toy kangaroo for my son, Campbell. He was just a class act, the kind of champion any man would want to be."

But what of the champion Hatton is? His title-winning effort against Tszyu was one of the most extraordinary performances ever by a fighter from the British Isles, right up there with Randolph Turpin's great upset of Sugar Ray Robinson, John H Stracey's shocking win over Jose Napoles, Barry McGuigan's best night against Eusebio Pedroza, Lloyd Honeyghan's against Don Curry, the tragic and epic encounters between Nigel Benn and Gerald McClellan and Chris Eubank and Michael Watson, and Wayne McCullough's defeat of Yasuei Yakushiji in Nagoya, Japan. His dynamic, unyielding style of fighting is the shining element of Hatton's appeal. Tszyu brought with him a wealth of experience and one of the most formidable arsenals in boxing, but Hatton took to the ring the abundant enterprise of youth. He knew he was about to make a real leap in class, but he was not in the slightest way daunted, for he had been through rough ordeals before.

On the floor against Eamonn Magee in the opening round, Hatton had also been cut badly in the first three minutes against Jon Thaxton and Vince Phillips. In his 20th fight, in Detroit against Costa Rican opponent Gilbert Quiros, he returned to his corner after a chastening first round with one eye swollen shut and badly cut. "I'll give you another round," the doctor told him. Momentarily, Hatton believed he was beaten.

Hatton reaches out to his loyal fans following his upset TKO of Tszyu. It is his relationship to his followers and his down-to-earth personality, as much as his exciting, two-fisted style, that has endeared Hatton to so many people.

"I could barely see through the swelling and all the blood pouring into my eye, but I came out for that second round absolutely determined to turn the fight right around," Hatton remembered. "My only option was to back him up, walk through everything he threw at me, and knock him out. I had just one round to do it in, and I did it. I stopped him. So I'd been through crises in my career. I'd been in every possible situation really, shook up, cut, dumped on my butt, taken to the verge of defeat. Kostya Tszyu held no fears for me.

"Every time I'd been asked to step up to the plate, I'd done it. My fight against Ben Tackie was a step up, and that night I produced one of my best boxing displays. Vince Phillips, Ray Oliveira, so many fighters said to me that they anticipated my high work rate, my bodypunching, my fitness, but what they didn't expect was my smarts in the ring. I'm a much cleverer fighter than people think. I sat down and studied Kostya's style and I had something to counteract everything he did. Of course, he had a right hand that could knock me out if he landed it properly, but I didn't stick my chin out for him. I had to be cute. My aim was to jump all over him, set a high pace, and show lots of movement, loads of variation in my punching, and make the fight physical. But I had to be clever in how I did it, and that's exactly what happened."

Then Hatton closed out the year with a brutal demolition of Carlos Maussa, the tough WBA titleholder from Colombia, in a unification fight in which he was again asked some searching questions.

"Barely a minute into the fight, I had a deep cut over my left eye and by the middle of the third round I was cut around my right eye, too, bad cuts that needed plastic surgery," Hatton emphasized. "He's a very unconventional fighter, difficult to read, a little bit like a puppet on a string, because you're not sure which way he's going to move, and he was also very heavy-handed, a powerful puncher with a good chin. I had to be versatile—fight him up close and fight at a distance—and I had to tough it out. To unify the belts meant a lot to me."

Especially so because of the drama he had been through with his former promoter, Frank Warren, the man who had guided his career to the point where he was able to challenge Tszyu, before they split acrimoniously in the fight's aftermath.

"I did let that affect me in the Maussa fight, and I shouldn't have, but it was an emotional time," Hatton acknowledged. "Frank did great things for my career, but with everything that's been said and done (Warren threatened to take out an injunction to prevent the Maussa fight from happening and still intends to sue Hatton for breach of contract) we now have to move on."

Hatton was overwhelmed by the way he was received by fans in Las Vegas, when he attended the Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins rematch in December. The Hispanic contingent affectionately took to calling him "a white Mexican" because of his aggressive approach to his job. "The reaction was great, really unexpected. I just can't believe that so many people know me," Hatton insisted. "There are so many great fighters around, like Floyd Mayweather, who I'd love to fight, and Marco Antonio Barrera, who's my friend and came over to watch me fight Maussa, it's really an honor to be THE RING's Fighter of the Year, especially as I'm the first British fighter to win this award. My dad has always bought the magazine so, to me, this is just unbelievable. 2005. What a year." ■

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

DIEGO CORRALES KO 10 JOSE LUIS CASTILLO

You knew it was great when even the old-timers said so. It's hard to know sometimes if the fight that's pulling you out of your seat is as good as it seems or if you're forgetting to compare it to what came before. But it wasn't just the fight media that called Corrales KO 10 Castillo one of the great fights in modern times. It wasn't just the Internet crowd, or the publicists or the TV suits, because you know how that goes. It was everyone. Even the dinosaurs who were around to see Zale and Graziano and Basilio and DeMarco and Ali and Frazier. They all agreed. That's how you knew it was great.

You can take your pick as to what made it great. Maybe for you it was Corrales' surreal comeback in the 10th round. It's understandable. Many fights feature improbable, last minute comebacks, but few after nine rounds of brutal infighting and two seemingly debilitating knockdowns. Corrales looked about as done as a fighter can look while still conscious, and it would have been the fight of the year even if he hadn't gotten up from that second knockdown. But Corrales' will, the depth of which is difficult for the rest of us to get our brains around, got him up and punching again.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM?GETTY IMAGES

It doesn't get any better than the first Corrales-Castillo fight

Maybe part of the magic was that Castillo too had come back from the dark places inside his head. Corrales' bombs had shaken him several times over the course of the fight, and though he didn't go down, he looked on several occasions nearly as foggy-headed as Corrales did in the 10th. Indeed, it seemed every time Corrales got distance and was able to extend those long, long arms, he rattled Castillo, who we had never before seen rattled. But the Mexican kept getting close

and turning over that hook, turning it over inside, even after Corrales rocked him again and again.

Maybe it was the skill level. The Gatti-Ward fights were wonderful and the fight game will always need the Vinny Maddalones. But highly skilled fighters like Corrales and Castillo operate on another level. You can get an exciting fight out of a pair of novice golden glovers. Watch two women fight if all you want is flying punches. This was something different altogether.

You can complain that only a little more than 5,000 fans showed up to see it at the Mandalay Bay in Vegas. You can complain that Corrales cheated when he spit out his mouthpiece after the two knockdowns, a move that gained him invaluable seconds at the cost of two points on the cards had it gone the full route. If you're a sadist, you can complain that referee Tony Weeks stopped it without giving Castillo the same benefit of the doubt he'd accorded Corrales earlier, even though Castillo was clearly gone and about to be launched into the third row. You can always find something to complain about. This was one to savor—for a long time. Ask the dinosaurs. Even they'll tell you. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

If not for Corrales' miracle kayo of Castillo, **Miguel Cotto**'s dramatic seventh-round stoppage of unheralded **Ricardo Torres** in Atlantic City in September would have been a strong contender to take top honors in this category. Floored in the second and hurt badly in the fifth, Cotto nonetheless overpowered and dropped Torres four times in as thrilling a slugfest as you'll ever see.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Cotto had his hands full with Torres

A few rounds in, it looked like **Erik Morales** would have not a lot of trouble with **Manny Pacquaio** in their war in Las Vegas in March, but once Pac-Man got warmed up, things changed. With blood all over his face, Pacquaio charged headlong into Morales' right hands and got his pound of flesh on the way to losing a hard-fought 12-round decision.

If you like headbutts, blood, and more blood, then you loved light heavyweight **Tomasz Adamek**'s electrifying brawl with Australia's **Paul Briggs** in Chicago in February. A clash of heads opened a gash outside Adamek's left eye in the second and it poured all night, but didn't stop him from pulling out a majority decision in a bloody scorcher.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Bloody Arce storms into Hussein

You've got to feel for **Carlos Hernandez**, who, as usual, gave it all he had against **Jesus Chavez** in yet another spirited but losing effort in their 12-round junior lightweight war in May in California. Neither guy took a backward step all night and both fought their hearts out, with Chavez just a little better.

Most fights that feature one guy getting off the canvas three times—as junior lightweight **Yodsanan Nanthachai** did against **Vicente Mosquera** in their April battle in New York—would be considered blowouts more than barnburners, but this was an exception. Nanthachai kept getting up and giving almost as good as he got on the way to dropping a bitterly fought decision.

It's been a long time since we've seen a fighter spill as much blood as **Jorge Arce** did in scoring a brutal 10th-round knockout of **Hussein Hussein** on the Morales-Pacquaio undercard. But the blood didn't make it great; the non-stop back-and-forth action did. It was one of the best flyweight fights we've seen. Ever.

We can't count the number of times **Wayne McCullough** has been in a Fight-of-the-Year runner-up, and his brawl with junior featherweight beltholder **Oscar Larios** in February in California gets him here again. True to form, McCullough never stopped charging in, even while Larios outfought him on the way to winning a decision in an excellent scrap.

There's no equivalent in sports to the double knockdown, which is what made junior middleweight **Sechew Powell**'s first-round stoppage of **Cornelius Bundrage** so much fun. When both guys are down two seconds into the fight you know it's special. If Powell never does anything again, he'll always have this one to look back on.

ROUND OF THE YEAR

DIEGO CORRALES-JOSE LUIS CASTILLO, ROUND 10

Even if the 10th round had never happened, Diego Corrales vs. Jose Luis Castillo on May 7 still would have been a great fight. But it wouldn't have been an *all-time great* fight. It wouldn't have been the stuff of legend. You wouldn't have had writers at ringside calling it the greatest fight they'd ever seen. You wouldn't have had fans making copies of the tape for all of their friends.

Round 10 took Corrales-Castillo I to another place. Whatever elements you require to make a round of boxing spectacular, the 10th frame of this battle for the world lightweight championship had them. You need multiple knockdowns? Check. Both guys getting badly hurt? Check. A change in momentum that you don't believe even though your eyes are assuring you it's happening? Check. A trainer

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAN/GETTY IMAGES

Corrales comes off the floor—twice—to stop Castillo in 2005's best round

dropping F-bombs? Check. And controversy? That's a big ol' check.

Through nine rounds, it was a one-point fight either way. Or, more accurately, a one-point war either way. Corrales' trainer, Joe Goossen, thought Castillo was weakening, so he sent "Chico" out with orders to finish his man. If Goossen was right, then Castillo has a funny way of showing that he's weak.

Castillo landed three jabs to the head and one to the body. Corrales came right back with a right to the body, but he brought his glove back too low, and, 26 seconds into the round, the Mexican fired a perfect left hook to the point of Corrales' chin. Chico's body suddenly had no resistance to gravity, sinking down to the canvas. He rolled over and lost his mouthpiece, and when he beat referee Tony Weeks' count at eight, a timeout was called to replace the gumshield, buying Corrales eight additional seconds.

That wasn't enough time. Corrales walked immediately into a clean left. Castillo then landed a jab and another vicious hook, followed by a right uppercut and a left hook, and Corrales was down again with 2:06 left on the clock. And again, the mouthpiece came right out, this instance more blatant than the last one. After Corrales beat Weeks' count by about half a second, the ref called a timeout to penalize him for spitting out the mouthpiece. And Goossen took his time rinsing it and putting it back in, while he dispensed some free advice to his fighter. You might think it would have been survival advice. Instead, it was, "You gotta f___in' get inside on him now."

By the time the fight resumed, Corrales had gotten an extra 20 seconds of recovery time. Castillo landed a left, but this time Corrales came back with a left of his own. Castillo scored with a straight left, and Corrales delivered a sizzling counter left off the ropes. Then Corrales struck with a beautiful right cross, and Castillo, clearly buzzed, fell into a clinch.

They charged right back at each other after being separated, and Corrales scored immediately with a left hook that backed the champion into the ropes. They traded huge shots along the strands, and Corrales punctuated the exchange with a crushing right hand. A corking left hook soon turned Castillo's head, sending him wobbling backward. It didn't seem possible, but sure enough, Castillo was in huge trouble after seemingly having the fight wrapped up a minute earlier.

Corrales scored with a right. Then a one-two. Then a right, a left, and another right. A left propped Castillo's head up for a right to the jaw that shifted Castillo's body 12 inches to the right. Castillo's head began to sag forward—directly into the path of a left hook that snapped it straight back. With the Mexican's eyes rolling back in his head, Weeks jumped in and called a halt at the 2:04 mark.

So much had happened so quickly it almost didn't seem real. But it was all too real for Castillo. And so wonderfully real for Corrales. Not to mention fantastically real for everyone watching. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

One way or another, **Corrales** and **Castillo** were giving us the Round of the Year. The eighth round of their first battle was the top runner-up, providing breathtaking, suspenseful, close-range action for three solid minutes.

Nearly every round of **Miguel Cotto** vs. **Ricardo Torres** in September provided heart-pounding action, with the most exceptional moments coming in round two. Torres battered Cotto and put the heavy favorite on the canvas for the first time in his career, but Cotto never stopped firing back, showing the heart that would eventually pull him through.

Torres hands Cotto his first knockout as a pro

You have to love it when both fighters hit the canvas in the same round, which is precisely what happened in the frenetic third round of the April junior lightweight bout between **Vicente Mosquera** and **Yodsanan Nanthachai**. Yodsanan struck first, but Mosquera recovered and returned the favor on his way to a hard-earned 12-round decision win.

Their first fight was probably a little bit better, but the best round of the **Antonio Tarver-Glen Johnson** series was the 11th of their June rematch. Johnson knew he needed to do something dramatic to retain the light heavyweight title, and both men were rocked during a fast-paced stanza that left them both with almost nothing left to offer in round 12.

Other fantastic three-minute chunks of action from 2005: the gripping 12th round of welterweight **Luis Collazo**'s narrow win over **Jose Antonio Rivera** in Rivera's hometown; round seven of the heavyweight battle between **Calvin Brock** and **Jameel McCline**, in which Brock was floored heavily, but gutted through and controlled the rest of the round; and the ninth round of **Ike Quartey**'s win over **Verno Phillips**, in which Quartey was dropped by a massive left hook, but got up and slugged it out until the end of the round.

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

ALLAN GREEN KO 1 JAIDON CODRINGTON

It goes without saying that if you love boxing, you enjoy violence. Maybe you're not a violent person yourself, maybe you're anti-war, maybe you were always the kid who broke up the fights on the playground. But under the right circumstances at least, *controlled* circumstances, inside a boxing ring, with gloves and rules and world-class athletes, you crave the violence. You thirst for the savagery.

Marvin Hagler and Tommy Hearns proved two decades ago that you don't need 10 or 12 or 15 rounds to quench that thirst. Hagler and Hearns quenched every fight fan's thirst inside of three rounds. And on November 4, in Miami, Oklahoma, Allan Green showed that it could be done far quicker than that. In just 18 seconds against Jaidon Codrington, Green quenched any thirst for violence you may have had. This wasn't just violent. This was scary. This was borderline horrific. This was a knockout that no one who bore witness will ever forget.

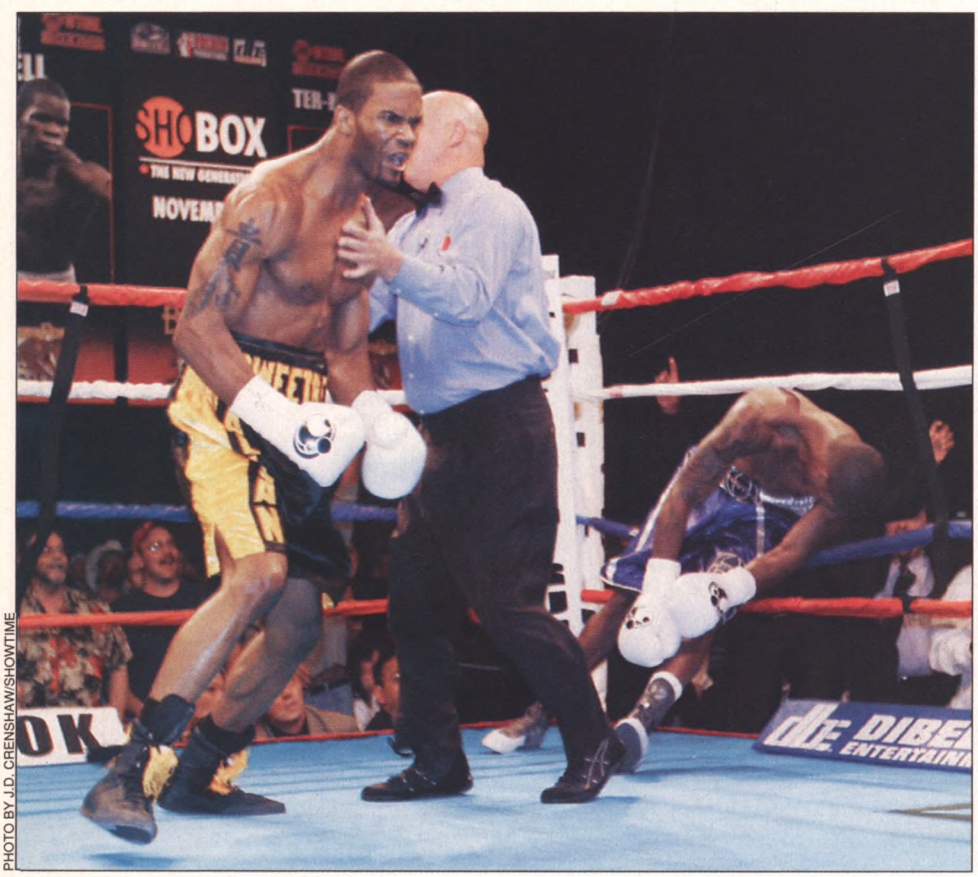


PHOTO BY J.D. CRENSHAW/SHOWTIME

Green's kayo of Codrington was downright scary

It was perhaps the most anticipated bout in the history of Showtime's *ShoBox* series, pitting two of America's best super middleweight prospects—the 17-0 Green and the 9-0 Codrington—against each other in what looked like a huge step-up fight for both. As it turned out, it was too huge of a step up for the younger, less-experienced Codrington, and not by a little.

The feeling-out process lasted all of about six or seven seconds, until Green cracked his 21-year-old opponent on the jaw with a whistling left hook. Codrington, caught cold and badly buzzed by the shot, dropped his hands immediately and backed into the ropes. Green pounced, firing viciously with left hooks to the body and head before zeroing in with two right hands flush on the

chin that snapped Codrington's head back.

Codrington was already out on his feet, but it was all happening so quickly that referee Gerald Ritter didn't realize the fight needed to be stopped, and Green teed off with one last left hook that crashed off his defenseless foe's exposed jaw. Codrington's limp body slumped to the left while his rear rested on the second rope for just a moment, then his torso pitched back through the ropes and over the ring apron, his whole body parallel with the ground as the second strand kept him aloft. Green fans shrieked in delight; Codrington fans shrieked in horror. No count was necessary. After just 18 seconds, this fight was over.

But the fight to ensure Codrington's safety was just beginning. As Ritter struggled to help him back into the ring and remove his mouthpiece, the ring was overrun with family and friends of both fighters, many of them getting into skirmishes and nearly trampling the medical personnel who were attending to the fallen Codrington.

It was an ugly, violent scene—in stark contrast to the beautifully violent knockout that preceded it. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

It was a heck of a year for speedy, sensational knockouts on *ShoBox*, as running a close second to Green-Codrington was the May bout between **Sechew Powell** and **Cornelius Bundrage**, which lasted all of 22 seconds. Incredibly, those 22 seconds contained five knockdowns—at least unofficially. Just moments into the bout, both fighters connected simultaneously for an incredible double knockdown (though the stunned referee incorrectly ruled it a double slip). And just one punch later—a wicked straight left from Powell—the fight was over. The left sent Bundrage down on his back, and then he went into his Trevor Berbick impression, rising, falling again, rising once more, and stumbling to the canvas one last time, where he was counted out, giving Powell the bizarre and spectacular kayo win.

Prospect-vs.-prospect bouts didn't have a monopoly on graphic knockouts in 2005. There were also some major championship-level fights that ended in barbaric blastouts, most notably the October rematch between **Jose Luis Castillo** and **Diego Corrales**. Perhaps it was because Castillo was stronger from having weighed in over the lightweight limit, but his punches affected Corrales all night long, especially when he clocked "Chico" with a picture-perfect left hook in round four. How awesome a punch was it? If you know Corrales, you know it takes quite a lot to knock him down and keep him down.

The same goes for **Scott Pemberton**, who's been knocked down several times in his career, but has a huge heart that usually wills him back into fights. Against **Jeff Lacy** in November, heart couldn't save him. In round two, the heavy-handed Lacy crushed Pemberton with about as loud a looping right hand to the noggin as you'll ever hear, and "The Sandman" hit the beach.

But that may not have been the best second-round right-hand kayo of the year. In April, **Marco Antonio Barrera** took on **Mzonke Fana** in a horrid mismatch that produced a terrific ending. Barrera's the king of throwing textbook punches, and the straight right that leveled the badly outgunned African was nothing if not textbook. Barrera definitely put the "zonk" in "Mzonke" that night.

And **Brian Viloria** justified the "Punch" part of his "Hawaiian Punch" nickname in September when he claimed a junior flyweight belt by wiping out **Eric Ortiz** with one second remaining on the clock in the first round. It was a snapping straight right from Viloria that did the trick, dropping Ortiz hard. The Mexican struggled back to his feet, but immediately crashed back down, ending the bout in short order.

And speaking of short order, **Lamon Brewster** scored 2005's best heavyweight knockout in May, when he blitzed **Andrew Golota** and pulverized the Pole in just 53 seconds. Brewster scored three knockdowns, all from flush powerpunches, to establish himself as a serious player among boxing's big men.

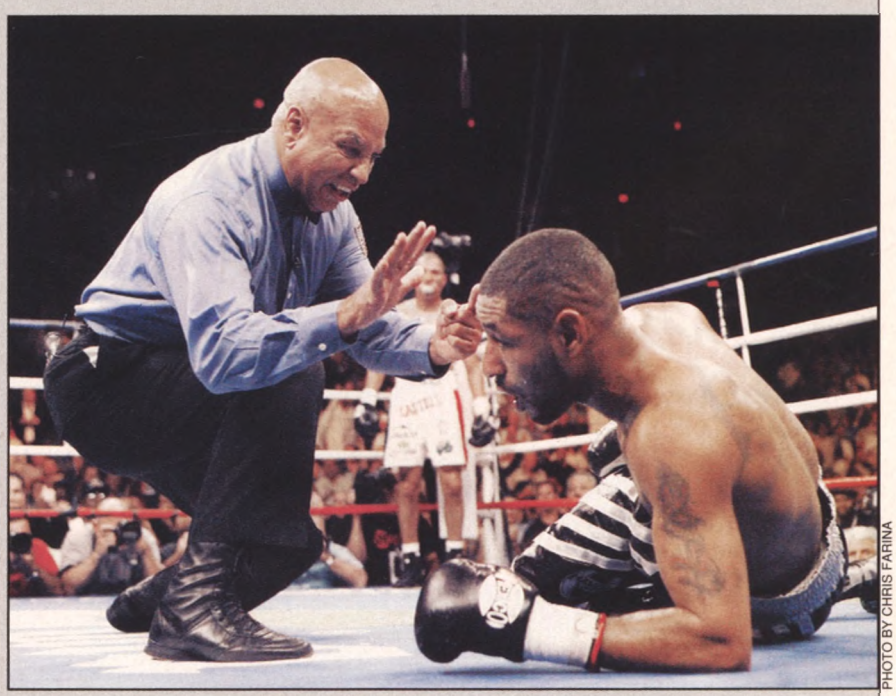


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Corrales takes the count from ref Joe Cortez

UPSET OF THE YEAR

ZAHIR RAHEEM W 12 ERIK MORALES

It's difficult to know what Bob Arum was thinking when he matched Erik Morales, one of Top Rank's biggest stars, against speedy Philly slickster Zahir Raheem in what was essentially an infomercial for the popular Mexican's rematch with Manny Pacquiao. But we know what he was thinking after Raheem handed Morales a 12-round boxing lesson: Let's pretend that the Raheem fight never happened and plunge ahead with Morales-Pacquiao II regardless.

That's okay with us because the first Morales-Pacquiao bout was a corker, and besides, Pac-Man isn't going to turn

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS/HBO

Raheem rocks Morales en route to winning the biggest upset of 2005

cutie just because Raheem was so successful. The Filipino is just as macho as Morales, and the only thing cute about him is his grin. But none of that takes away from Raheem's accomplishment as only the second man to beat Morales in his storied 51-fight pro career.

Despite a respectable 26-1 (16) record going in, Raheem was considered somewhat of a lost cause, a gifted boxer who never quite got over his failure to medal in the 1996 Olympics. But that perception was based more on his sputtering career trajectory than anything that had transpired inside a boxing ring since he turned pro. In his only loss, Raheem looked dreadfully unlucky not to get the nod in his July 2004 fight with Rocky Juarez, who barely escaped with his unbeaten streak intact after referee Robert Gonzalez penalized the Philadelphian three points for infractions only Gonzalez saw.

But no amount of help from a misguided ref was going to help Morales, who could never really find the solution to Raheem's savvy boxing and stinging counters.

Raheem jumped off to a quick start and never allowed Morales to find his rhythm. His jab smacked into "El Terrible's" face with unerring accuracy and his right hand frequently followed, while his fleet footwork and upper-body movement had Morales missing the mark time and again.

Just about the only problem Raheem had during the fight was the slippery logo painting on the canvas, which did something Morales never came close to accomplishing—put Raheem on the floor. But between slips and pratfalls, he was in total control, and in the fifth the underdog actually rocked the granite-chinned Mexican into the ropes with a flush right hand.

Raheem has never been considered a particularly dangerous puncher, but his spearing left jabs jolted and discouraged Morales, and when he started to dig to the body in the eighth, you could tell Morales felt them. At one point in the 10th, Raheem landed eight jabs in a row without return, and this was against a man considered one of the finest fighters, pound-for-pound, in the world.

Morales mounted a last-ditch effort in the 11th round, and connected with his best punches of the fight, but it was nowhere near enough, and Raheem romped home the winner by unanimous scores of 118-110, 116-112, and 115-113.

We still don't know if Raheem is going to be able to capitalize on his surprising victory, but there's no question that what he did at the Staples Center in Los Angeles on September 10 was the biggest upset of 2005. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

Sometimes, even seeing isn't believing, which was virtually the case when gangly, wild-swinging **Carlos Maussa** kayoed highly touted **Vivian Harris** in the seventh round to capture the WBA super lightweight title. Harris took the bout for a small purse so he could appear on the Floyd Mayweather-Arturo Gatti PPV in Atlantic City, but what was supposed to be a showcase turned into a nightmare when Maussa survived Harris' best punches early and rallied back to flatten him for a exceedingly improbable victory.

Featherweight **Rocky Juarez** may have escaped his close call with Zahir Raheem in 2004, but there was no escape when the 2000 Olympic silver medalist faced **Humberto Soto** in April in Rosemont, Illinois. Soto, a late-sub for WBC featherweight titleholder Injun Chi, walked through Juarez' best shots and pounded out a unanimous 12-round decision in an excellent fight.

PHOTO BY PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

McBride makes Tyson quit

Veerapol Sahaprom had a 10-year, 45-bout winning streak going for him when he stepped into the ring in April to make his 15th defense of the WBC bantamweight strap, against Japanese underdog **Hozumi Hasegawa**. But the streak came to an unexpected end when the younger (24 to 36) Hasegawa outfought him over 12 fast-paced rounds to win a unanimous decision.

Another Thai titleholder went down to unexpected defeat when Panama's **Vincente Mosquera** out-dueled **Yodsanan Nanthachai** over 12 action-packed rounds of give-and-take to annex the WBA 130-pound belt on the Toney-Ruiz card at Madison Square Garden, in April.

Hot featherweight prospect **Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero** lost his unbeaten record to unheralded **Gamaliel Diaz** in December. It wasn't a total disaster. Guerrero fought well enough to make it a split decision, but when there was no doubt that the aggressive, way-better-than-expected Diaz deserved the verdict.

In other notable upsets, heavyweight journeyman **Zuri Lawrence** won a 10-round decision over fringe contender **Jameel McCline**, chunky Irishman **Kevin McBride** ended **Mike Tyson**'s career (we think) with a sixth-round TKO victory, and last, but far from least, **Ricky Hatton** unseated long-reigning junior welterweight champion **Kostya Tszyu** via 11th-round TKO.

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

IKE QUARTEY

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Following almost five years on the shelf, Quartey came back with three wins in 2005

If you don't think what Ike Quartey did in 2005 is significant, think again. Prizefighters don't come back after almost five years off and step back into the title picture just a couple of fights later. There's almost no precedent for it. Yes, Felix Trinidad and Kostya Tszyu both surpassed expectations in the last couple of years when they returned after long layoffs to win important bouts. And fight history is full of comebacks storied for this reason or that: Muhammad Ali after his exile, George Foreman after his conversion, Ray Leonard after his detached retina. The previous generation had Eder Jofre and Vicente Saldivar.

But Jofre's retirement had lasted just three years. Same with Saldivar's, and Leonard's. Ali was out three years too. And Foreman took his sweet time once on the comeback trail, not getting within driving distance of a live body until he was a couple dozen fights into it. Quartey? Second fight in, a top contender.

You wouldn't have been far off in thinking Quartey was dreaming when he floated the story out of Ghana that he was coming back. Not only because he'd been off for so long, but because in his last three fights, he'd appeared to be slipping anyhow. There was the draw against Jose Luis Lopez in 1997, in which he'd been floored twice, then the losses to Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Vargas in '99 and '00, respectively. His hey-day as the seemingly invincible WBA welterweight belt holder, which ran from '94 to '99, seemed a lifetime ago.

So you could be forgiven for thinking another of the fight game's uniquely pitiable endings was around the corner, even after Quartey stopped Clint McNeil in eight rounds in Ghana in January '05. But before we knew it, there he was five

months later against Verno Phillips, a legitimate top-five junior middleweight. Sure Phillips had just lost to Kassim Ouma, but where's the shame in that? Here was a tough, world-class guy Quartey was taking on after fighting eight rounds in just under five years. And he had a hard time early, getting rocked until he got his legs under him and took over.

Yes, Phillips floored him in the ninth and if an earlier slip had been ruled a knockdown, which HBO replays showed might have been the correct call, the verdict would have been a draw. But for the fight's bulk, Quartey was in charge, rattling Phillips with that old familiar piston of a jab and the unanimous decision in his favor seemed completely just, knockdowns or no.

Quartey's win over limited but game Carlos Bojorquez in December was a study in precision counterpunching. Again, Quartey started slowly, but by the middle rounds he was pelting poor Bojorquez with every jab and right hand he threw. By the time referee Joe Cortez stopped it in the 10th, it was a wonder Quartey's hands weren't busted. Bojorquez isn't a world-class fighter, but he's tough and durable, and Quartey got in almost 10 good rounds of work against him.

As the year closed out, Quartey, very spry still at 36 years old, had put himself in position to meet the winner of Vargas-Shane Mosley, or maybe De La Hoya-Mayorga. Five years off, three fights, three solid wins. If it ended now without another fight, it would still be a hell of a comeback. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

Many who had doubted the long term potential of **Zab Judah** felt vindicated after he dropped a decision to Cory Spinks in April 2004. A poor showing against Rafael Pineda in his next fight didn't help, but Judah got some vindication of his own with a conclusive kayo of Spinks in their rematch in February, which netted him the world welterweight title.

You weren't alone if you thought it was over for **Nate Campbell** following his surprising decision loss to Francisco Lorenzo in June, which came on the heels of a similarly stunning stoppage loss to Robbie Peden in their rematch in February. Hot prospect Almazbek Raiymkulov must have thought so too, until Campbell battered and stopped him in the 10th round in October.

They weren't quite the fans expected or wanted, but **Fernando Vargas'** restrained, methodical comeback wins over Raymond Joval and Javier Castillejo in March and August, respectively, did what they were intended to do: get him a big money fight. It doesn't matter that it's not against Oscar De La Hoya. Shane Mosley will do.

The beating **Juan Lazcano** took against Jose Luis Castillo in June 2004 would have ruined a lot of guys, but not Lazcano. After barely breaking a sweat against Marco Angel Perez in an August first-round kayo win, he outlasted and outslugged tough Courtney Burton on the way to a ninth-round stoppage win in November.

It hasn't been pretty, but the rebuilding of **Wladimir Klitshcko** has been effective. After flaming out against Lamon Brewster in April '04 and looking terrible against Dvarryl Williamson six months later, Klitschko pitched a shutout against undefeated Eliseo Castillo in April. And his decision win over undefeated puncher Samuel Peter, during which he suffered three knockdowns, set him up for a possible rematch with Brewster.

No one's saying Talmadge Griffis and Cisse Salif are world-beaters, but before facing them in March and October, respectively, heavyweight **David Tua** had been out of action since a March '03 draw with Hasim Rahman. His 10th-round kayo of Griffis and distance win over Salif put him on the right track, and anytime you have a puncher like Tua in the mix, times are good.

After logging exactly one win in his previous six fights, **Shane Mosley** had to start putting himself together again and did it in '05. His decision wins over David Estrada in April and Jose Luis Cruz in September didn't remind anyone of his days at lightweight, but were big steps in the right direction.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Wladimir capped a comeback year with hard-fought win over previously undefeated Peter

EVENT OF THE YEAR

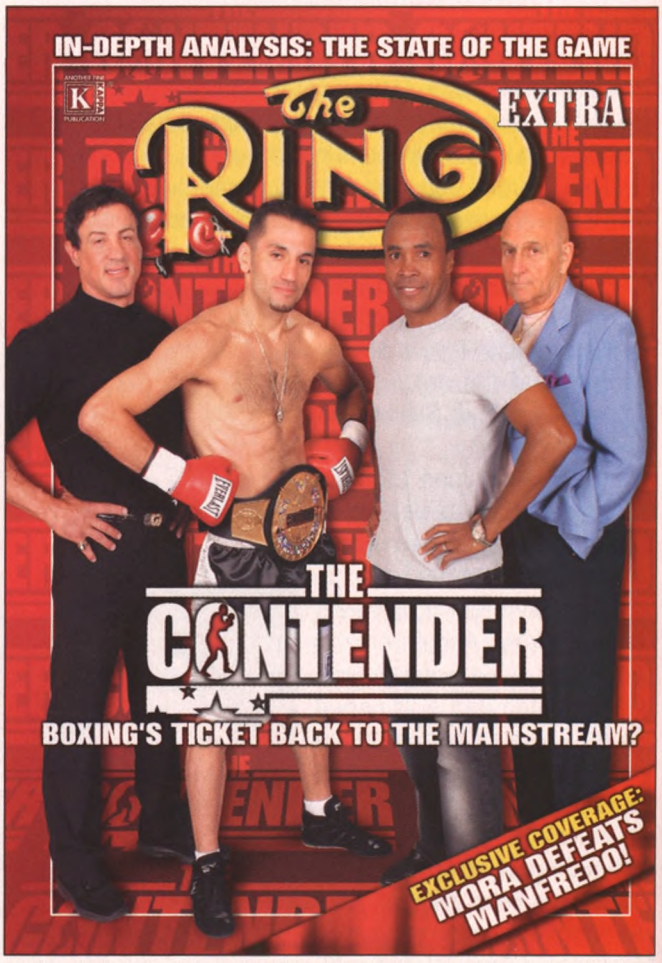
THE CONTENDER

If you were a boxing fan, you had to pinch yourself. It couldn't be real. The announcement that NBC, one of the old network television giants, was going to air a weekly boxing-themed reality show seemed too good to be true. Here we were living in an age when much of the mainstream media has completely turned its back on prizefighting, except as an object of ridicule or derision, an age when the pay-per-view business, while generating big money for a select few stars and their promoters, threatens to shrink boxing's already thinning fan base; when network television—with the exception of the Main Events experiment of a couple of years ago—hadn't shown boxing on a regular basis in more than 20 years.

Yet, here was NBC, one of the big guys, taking a chance on boxing at the tune of a million bucks an episode. A weekly show in prime time, no less. Really, they were banking on the genius of the three executive producers—Jeff Wald, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and reality show wonder-boy Mark Burnett, creator of *Survivor*, among other series—but that's quibbling. The point is someone with deep, deep pockets was putting on boxing when half the world could see it. And they knew enough to bring in Sugar Ray Leonard and Sylvester Stallone, two guys people who aren't hardcore fight fans, or even sports fans necessarily, know well and associate with boxing. Brainy move.

So *The Contender* began in March and if you really cared about the business you took a deep breath and didn't exhale fully until it was all over in May. Immediately and somewhat surprisingly, it was well-received critically by the mainstream media, who found the personal stories of the fighters and their families touching and well drawn, even if those same critics weren't fond of the sport overall. Conversely, the sentimentality and the edited and probably over-produced fight scenes turned off many fight fans, as did the so-called "challenges," a staple of any reality show.

It had other quirks that were unsettling to those who don't need any help from Hollywood types to enjoy a good fistfight; dubbed-in noise meant to represent punches landing and a



The Contender ***helped boxing in general, including THE RING, which sold more copies of this issue than any other in 2005***

cheering crowd; frequent close-ups of Leonard and Stallone at ringside reacting—or, in most cases, over-reacting—to this or that exchange, and a heavy emphasis on the girlfriends, wives, and children of the guys bleeding and punching in the ring. It got to be a little much.

In the end it was a mixed bag; the show drew an average of six million viewers a week, more than any pay-per-view show could ever hope to match, but was by network standards a flop. NBC did not renew it after the finale, which featured Sergio Mora outpointing Peter Manfredo (which drew 10 million viewers and packed Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, thank you very much).

But the news wasn't all bad; at least some of the blame could be placed on the network, which put it on three different time slots on three different days of the week, and ultimately against a trio of ratings monsters on Sunday night. So ESPN picked it up. The potential audience won't be as big, but there were lessons learned in the first season that will make it better. It's not the outcome we were wishing for at the start, but it is a beginning. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

Logic would suggest you shouldn't be surprised when a guy who's had to postpone a fight four straight times because of injuries decides to call it a day. Nonetheless, we were shocked when world heavyweight champion **Vitali Klitschko** abruptly retired in November after suffering a knee injury while preparing for his title defense against Hasim Rahman.

Looking at him, you wouldn't have predicted that **James Toney** was juicing before his 12-round win over WBA heavyweight beltholder John Ruiz in April. But postfight tests revealed the presence of Nandalone, a banned substance. Toney was suspended, fined, the result of the fight was changed to a no-decision, and the belt returned to Ruiz.

Just when it seemed that Showtime was getting the better of rival HBO in terms of the quality of its boxing telecasts, long-time fight czar **Jay Larkin** was fired by the cable giant during a round of corporate downsizing in November. Larkin was considered by most the brains behind Showtime's emergence as a threat to HBO's big-fight dominance.

The long-celebrated comeback of **Felix Trinidad**, one of the more popular fighters of the last decade, lasted exactly two fights. Following his disastrous showing against Winky Wright in May, in which he was shut out over 12 wholly one-sided rounds, Trinidad announced his re-retirement, effective immediately.

Cinderella Man, the Ron Howard-directed film about former heavyweight champion Jimmy Braddock, opened in theaters across America in June. Though largely praised by critics, it was a box-office flop despite the presence of Oscar-winner Russell Crowe in the title role. Fight purists, along with Max Baer Jr., expressed outrage at the depiction of Max Baer Sr., who was portrayed in the film as a sadistic brute.

The opening of the long-awaited **Muhammad Ali Center** finally occurred in November in Louisville, Kentucky. The center cost $75-million to build, takes up 93,000 square feet, and is six stories high. Luminaries from 12 foreign countries and 32 states in the U.S. attended the grand opening.

Following his win over Javier Castillejo in August, **Fernando Vargas** couldn't help but be distracted during his postfight interview with HBO's Larry Merchant. Members of his posse were involved in a full-scale melee in the stands at the Allstate Arena in Illinois. By the time local police restored order, seven people had been arrested and several more transported to area hospitals. It wasn't the Garden after Golota-Bowe I, but was still great fun all the same.

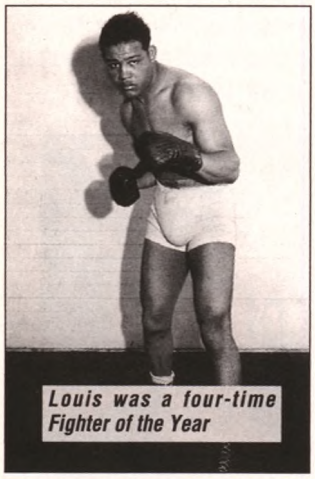
PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The fight after the fight

PAST WINNERS

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

1928: Gene Tunney
1929: Tommy Loughran
1930: Max Schmeling
1931: Tommy Loughran
1932: Jack Sharkey
1933: No Award
1934: Tony Canzoneri/Barney Ross
1935: Barney Ross
1936: Joe Louis
1937: Henry Armstrong
1938: Joe Louis
1939: Joe Louis
1940: Billy Conn
1941: Joe Louis
1942: Ray Robinson
1943: Fred Apostoli
1944: Beau Jack
1945: Willie Pep
1946: Tony Zale
1947: Gus Lesnevich
1948: Ike Williams
1949: Ezzard Charles
1950: Ezzard Charles



Louis was a four-time Fighter of the Year

1951: Ray Robinson
1952: Rocky Marciano
1953: Bobo Olson
1954: Rocky Marciano
1955: Rocky Marciano
1956: Floyd Patterson
1957: Carmen Basilio
1958: Ingemar Johansson
1959: Ingemar Johansson
1960: Floyd Patterson
1961: Joe Brown
1962: Dick Tiger
1963: Cassius Clay
1964: Emile Griffith
1965: Dick Tiger
1966: No Award
1967: Joe Frazier
1968: Nino Benvenuti
1969: Jose Napoles
1970: Joe Frazier
1971: Joe Frazier
1972: Muhammad Ali/ Carlos Monzon
1973: George Foreman
1974: Muhammad Ali
1975: Muhammad Ali
1976: George Foreman
1977: Carlos Zarate
1978: Muhammad Ali
1979: Ray Leonard
1980: Thomas Hearns
1981: Ray Leonard/ Salvador Sanchez
1982: Larry Holmes
1983: Marvin Hagler
1984: Thomas Hearns
1985: Marvin Hagler/Donald Curry
1986: Mike Tyson
1987: Evander Holyfield
1988: Mike Tyson
1989: Pernell Whitaker
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez
1991: James Toney
1992: Riddick Bowe
1993: Michael Carbajal
1994: Roy Jones
1995: Oscar De La Hoya
1996: Evander Holyfield
1997: Evander Holyfield
1998: Floyd Mayweather
1999: Paulie Ayala
2000: Felix Trinidad
2001: Bernard Hopkins
2002: Vernon Forrest
2003: James Toney
2004: Glen Johnson

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

1945: Rocky Graziano KO 10 Freddie Cochrane
1946: Tony Zale KO 6 Rocky Graziano
1947: Rocky Graziano KO 6 Tony Zale
1948: Marcel Cerdan KO 12 Tony Zale
1949: Willie Pep W 15 Sandy Saddler
1950: Jake LaMotta KO 15 Laurent Dauthuille
1951: Jersey Joe Walcott KO 7 Ezzard Charles
1952: Rocky Marciano KO 13 Jersey Joe Walcott
1953: Rocky Marciano KO 11 Roland LaStarza
1954: Rocky Marciano KO 8 Ezzard Charles
1955: Carmen Basilio KO 12 Tony DeMarco
1956: Carmen Basilio KO 9 Johnny Saxton
1957: Carmen Basilio W 15 Ray Robinson
1958: Ray Robinson W 15 Carmen Basilio
1959: Gene Fullmer KO 14 Carmen Basilio
1960: Floyd Patterson KO 5 Ingemar Johansson
1961: Joe Brown W 15 Dave Charnley
1962: Joey Giardello W 10 Henry Hank
1963: Cassius Clay W 10 Doug Jones
1964: Cassius Clay KO 7 Sonny Liston
1965: Floyd Patterson W 12 George Chuvalo
1966: Jose Torres W 15 Eddie Cotton
1967: Nino Benvenuti W 15 Emile Griffith
1968: Dick Tiger W 10 Frank DePaula
1969: Joe Frazier KO 7 Jerry Quarry
1970: Carlos Monzon KO 12 Nino Benvenuti
1971: Joe Frazier W 15 Muhammad Ali
1972: Bob Foster KO 14 Chris Finnegan
1973: George Foreman KO 2 Joe Frazier
1974: Muhammad Ali KO 8 George Foreman
1975: Muhammad Ali KO 14 Joe Frazier
1976: George Foreman KO 5 Ron Lyle
1977: Jimmy Young W 12 George Foreman
1978: Leon Spinks W 15 Muhammad Ali
1979: Danny Lopez KO 15 Mike Ayala
1980: Matthew Saad Muhammad KO 14 Yaqui Lopez
1981: Sugar Ray Leonard KO 14 Thomas Hearns
1982: Bobby Chacon W 15 Bazooka Limon
1983: Bobby Chacon W 12 Cornelius Boza-Edwards
1984: Jose Luis Ramirez KO 4 Edwin Rosario
1985: Marvin Hagler KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1986: Steve Cruz W 15 Barry McGuigan
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Tony Lopez W 12 Rocky Lockridge
1989: Roberto Duran W 12 Iran Barkley
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez KO 12 Meldrick Taylor
1991: Robert Quiroga W 12 Akeem Anifowoshe
1992: Riddick Bowe W 12 Evander Holyfield
1993: Michael Carbajal KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1994: Jorge Castro KO 9 John David Jackson
1995: Saman Sorjaturong KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
1999: Paulie Ayala W 12 Johnny Tapia
2000: Erik Morales W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera
2001: Micky Ward W 10

Holyfield nails Tyson in 1996's best fight

Emanuel Burton
2002: Micky Ward W 10
Arturo Gatti
2003: Arturo Gatti W 10
Micky Ward
2004: Marco Antonio Barrera W 12
Erik Morales

ROUND OF THE YEAR

1945: Joyce-Williams, 12
1946: Zale-Graziano, 6
1947: Louis-Walcott, 4
1948: Louis-Walcott, 11
1949: Graziano-Fusari, 10
1950: LaMotta-Dauthuille, 15
1951: Marciano-Louis, 8
1952: Marciano-Walcott, 13
1953: Gavilan-Basilio, 2
1954: Moore-Johnson, 14
1955: Moore-Olson, 3
1956: Robinson-Olson, 4
1957: Robinson-Fullmer, 5
1958: Johansson-Machen, 1
1959: Johansson-Patterson, 3
1960: Patterson-Johansson, 5
1961: Patterson-Johansson, 1
1962: Liston-Patterson, 1
1963: Liston-Patterson, 1
1964: Torres-Olson, 1
1965: Torres-Pastrano, 6
1966: Ortiz-Ramos, 5
1967: Tiger-Rouse, 12
1968: Foster-Tiger, 4
1969: Benvenuti-Rodriguez, 11
1970: Ali-Bonavena, 15
1971: Frazier-Ali, 15
1972: Ali-Foster, 5
1973: Foreman-Frazier, 2
1974: Ali-Foreman, 8
1975: Ali-Frazier, 12
1976: Foreman-Lyle, 4 & 5
1977: Young-Foreman, 12
1978: Spinks-Ali, 15
1979: Franklin-Johnson, 8
1980: Saad Muhammad-Lopez, 8
1981: Lee-LoCicero, 5
1982: Gomez-Pintor, 3
1983: Holmes-Witherspoon, 9
1984: Meza-Garza, 1
1985: Hagler-Hearns, 1
1986: Cruz-McGuigan, 15
1987: Seabrooks-Jacob, 1
1988: Tyson-Spinks, 1
1989: Gutierrez-Franklin, 12
1990: Davis-Breland, 9
1991: No Award
1992: Bowe-Holyfield, 10
1993: Norris-Waters, 2
1994: Castro-Jackson, 9
1995: Sorjaturong-Gonzalez, 7
1996: Liles-Littles, 3
1997: Gatti-Ruelas, 5
1998: Robinson-Gatti II, 3
1999: De La Hoya-Quartey, 6
2000: Morales-Barrera, 5
2001: Hopkins-Trinidad, 10
2002: Ward-Gatti I, 9
2003: Freitas-Barrios, 11
2004: Barrera-Morales III, 11

Franklin tears into Johnson in their memorable eighth round

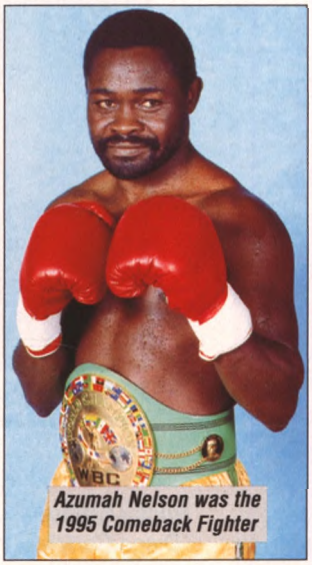
Gatti levels Ruelas in 1997 Knockout of the Year

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

1989: Michael Nunn KO 1
Sumbu Kalambay
1990: Terry Norris KO 1
John Mugabi
1991: No Award
1992: Kennedy McKinney KO 11
Welcome Ncita
Morris East KO 11
Akinobu Hiranaka
1993: Gerald McClellan KO 5
Julian Jackson
1994: George Foreman KO 10
Michael Moorer
1995: Julio Cesar Vasquez KO 11
Carl Daniels
1996: Wilfredo Vasquez KO 11
Eloy Rojas
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5
Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Roy Jones KO 4
Virgil Hill
1999: Derrick Jefferson KO 6
Maurice Harris
2000: Ben Tackie KO 10
Roberto Garcia
2001: Lennox Lewis KO 4
Hasim Rahman
2002: Lennox Lewis KO 8
Mike Tyson
2003: Rocky Juarez KO 10
Antonio Diaz
2004: Antonio Tarver KO 2
Roy Jones

UPSET OF THE YEAR

1980: Yasutsune Uehara KO 6
Sammy Serrano
1981: Roger Stafford W 10
Pipino Cuevas
1982: Kirkland Laing W 10
Roberto Duran
1983: Gerrie Coetzee KO 10
Michael Dokes
1984: Gene Hatcher KO 11
Johnny Bumphus
1985: Michael Spinks W 15
Larry Holmes
1986: Lloyd Honeyghan KO 6
Donald Curry
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12
Marvin Hagler
1988: Iran Barkley KO 3
Thomas Hearns
1989: Rene Jacquot W 12
Donald Curry
1990: Buster Douglas KO 10
Mike Tyson
1991: No Award
1992: Azumah Nelson KO 8
Jeff Fenech
1993: Simon Brown KO 4
Terry Norris
1994: Vuyani Bungu W 12


Azumah Nelson was the 1995 Comeback Fighter

Kennedy McKinney
1995: Willy Salazar KO 7
Danny Romero
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11
Mike Tyson
1997: Vince Phillips KO 10
Kostya Tszyu
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10
Arturo Gatti
1999: Willy Wise W 10
Julio Cesar Chavez
2000: Jose Luis Castillo W 12
Steve Johnston
2001: Hasim Rahman KO 5
Lennox Lewis
2002: Juan Carlos Rubio W 10
Francisco Bojado
2003: Corrie Sanders KO 2
Wladimir Klitschko
2004: Glen Johnson KO 9
Roy Jones

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

1980: Shoji Oguma
1981: Jimmy Young
1982: Bobby Chacon
1983: Roberto Duran
1984: Marvin Johnson
1985: Lupe Pintor
1986: Edwin Rosario
1987: Frankie Duarte
1988: Michael Dokes
1989: Roberto Duran
1990: Tony Lopez
1991: Vinny Pazienza
1992: Iran Barkley
1993: Zack Padilla
1994: George Foreman
1995: Azumah Nelson
1996: Danny Romero
1997: Vince Phillips
1998: Kostya Tszyu
1999: Michael Carbajal
2000: Virgil Hill
2001: John Michael Johnson
2002: Arturo Gatti
2003: James Toney
2004: Marco Antonio Barrera

EVENT OF THE YEAR

1993: Fan Man at Holyfield-Bowe
1994: Revenge: The Rematches
1995: Tyson returns
1996: Riot at The Garden
1997: The bite
1998: Tyson's reinstatement
1999: The IBF indictments
2000: Mosley vs. De La Hoya
2001: Middleweight World Championship Series
2002: The Lewis-Tyson press conference brawl
2003: Roy Jones fights at heavyweight
2004: Lennox Lewis retirement ■

27th ANNUAL

•HIGHLY UNOFFICIAL OFFICIAL•

AWARDS

Manager Of The Year
Cameron Dunkin

Trainer Of The Year
Dan Birmingham

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Birmingham took Wright and Lacy to new heights in 2005

Female Fighter Of The Year
Holly Holm

Female Fight Of The Year
Cindy Serrano D 10 Rhonda Luna

Most Exciting Division
Lightweight

Most Boring Division
Strawweight

Division With Most Potential
Super Middleweight

Division With Least Potential
Heavyweight

Future Champion Trophy
Joel Julio

Billy Graham-Joey Giardello Highway Robbery Award
Jesse Brinkley W 5 Anthony Bonsante
O'Neil Bell W 12 Dale Brown
Bobby Pacquiao W 10 Carlos Hernandez
George Jones Tech. Win 9 Fred Moore

Tony Zale Bodypuncher Memorial
Miguel Cotto

Eder Jofre Best-Fighter-You-Never-Saw Award
Mikkel Kessler

Duane Bobick Disappointment Award
Almazbek Raiymkulov, Mike Anchondo, Kermit Cintron, Muhammad Abdullaev

Count Dracula Bloodbath Crimson Band-Aid
Tomasz Adamek W 12 Paul Briggs
Jorge Arce KO 10 Hussein Hussein
Sergio Mora W 8 Peter Manfredo

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Arce after bleeding a brawling his way to victory over Hussein

Rocky Balboa Gutsiest Effort Award
Diego Corrales (vs. Jose Luis Castillo, first fight)
Jose Luis Castillo (vs. Diego Corrales, first fight)
Hussein Hussein (vs. Jorge Arce, first fight)
Wayne McCullough (vs. Oscar Larios, both fights)
Miguel Cotto (vs. Ricardo Torres)
Ike Quartey (vs. Verno Phillips)
Jason Litzau (vs. John Nolasco)
Carlos Bojorquez (vs. Ike Quartey)

Henry Armstrong Windmill Imitation
Sam Soliman

Red Light-Green Light Crossroads Fight Of The Year
Calvin Brock W 10 Jameel McCline

The Comedy-On-TV Golden Giggles Award
Sylvester Stallone casually (and with pitiful technique) sparring in jeans and struggling to catch his breath on *The Contender*

Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom Featherfists Award
Zahir Raheem

Should've-Stayed-In-The-Pasture Wall Calendar
Julio Cesar Chavez, Riddick Bowe, Felix Trinidad, Alfonso Sanchez, Courage Tshabalala, John Brown

Muhammad Ali Time-To-Retire Pension Check
Roy Jones, Johnny Tapia, Yory Boy Campas, Courtney Burton, Ivan Robinson, Ray Oliveira, Miguel Angel Gonzalez, Ray Mercer

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Time to hang 'em up, Roy

Tony Ayala Jr. Wasted Talent Trophy
Mike Tyson (a lifetime achievement award)

Thomas Dewey "Fading Down The Stretch" Award
Jermain Taylor (vs. Bernard Hopkins)

Buster Mathis Miniature Empty Refridgerator
Riddick Bowe

Don't-Get-Up-To-Get-A-Beer Silver Mug
Sechew Powell KO 1 Cornelius Bundrage
Allan Green KO 1 Jaidon Codrington
Julio Diaz KO 1 Marco Angel Perez
Rocky Juarez KO 1 Juan Carlos Ramirez
Jorge Arce KO 2 Hussein Hussein
Jeff Lacy KO 2 Scott Pemberton

Never-In-A-Bad-Fight Purple Heart
Diego Corrales, Jorge Arce, Jhonny Gonzalez, Manny Pacquiao, Jesus Chavez, Carlos Hernandez

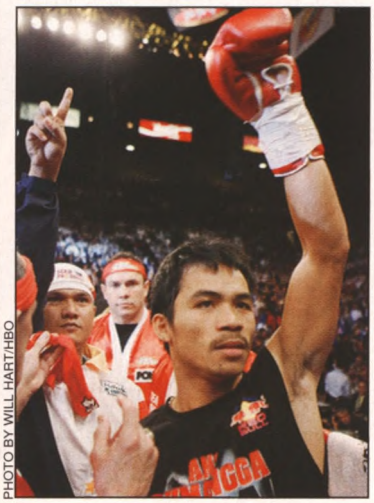


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Pac-Man always gives it all he's got

Howard Cosell "We Love Boxing" Trophy
HBO, for offering its subscribers so few desirable fights and so many superstar-vs.-opponent matchups this year

Ken Norton Media Good Guy Award
Ricky Hatton

Muhammad Ali "How To Lose With Class" Trophy
Diego Corrales

Spit-Or-Get-Off-The-Pot Award
Juan Manuel Marquez, Laila Ali, Luis Perez

Joe Bugner Just-Glad-To-Be-Here Trophy
Howard Eastman (vs. Bernard Hopkins)
DaVarryl Williamson (vs. Chris Byrd)
Eliceo Castillo (vs. Wladimir Klitschko)
Scott Pemberton (vs. Jeff Lacy)
Roy Jones (vs. Antonio Tarver)

Archie Moore Ol'-Man-River Rocking Chair
Oliver McCall

Jake LaMotta Cast-Iron-Chin Anvil
Samuel Peter (vs. Wladimir Klitschko)
Robbie Peden (vs. Marco Antonio Barrera)
Sebastian Lujan (vs. Antonio Margarito)
Sam Soliman (vs. Winky Wright)

Most Improved Fighter Award
Demetrius Hopkins

Gene Tunney Distinguished Champion Award
Jermain Taylor

Tap Tap Makathini Name Of The Year
Phathutshedzo Nemukongwe

Azumah Nelson "Where'd He Come From?" Trophy
Hozumi Hasegawa (W 12 Veerapol Sahaprom)
Celestino Caballero (W 12 Daniel Ponce DeLeon)
Ricardo Torres (KO by 7 Miguel Cotto)
Silverio Ortiz (W 10 Daniel Seda)
Vicente Mosquera (W 12 Yodsanan Nanthachai)
Gamaliel Diaz (W 12 Robert Guerrero)

TV Mismatches Of The Year
Floyd Mayweather KO 8 Henry Bruseles (HBO)
Dale Brown KO 5 Shelby Gross (ESPN2)
Laila Ali KO 8 Cassandra Geigger (ESPN2)
Laila Ali KO 3 Erin Toughill (PPV)
Marco Antonio Barrera KO 2 Mzonke Fana (HBO PPV)
Paul Williams KO 5 Alfonso Sanchez (Showtime)
Jhonny Gonzalez W 10 Adolfo Landeros (HBO Latino)
Julio Diaz KO 1 Russell Stoner Jones (ESPN2)
Antonio Escalante KO 3 Trinidad Mendoza (Telefutura)

Best Tiny Man In Elevator Shoes
Jorge Arce

Rip-Off-The-Public Non-Effort Of The Year
Monte Barrett (vs. Hasim Rahman)
Eric Morel (vs. Martin Castillo)
Dominick Guinn (vs. Friday Ahunanya)
Carlos Navarro (vs. Bobby Pacquiao)

Steve Martin Arrow-Through-Head Ridiculous Gimmick
Julio Cesar Chavez' "Adios" tour of "farewell" fights, in which a bout would be billed as possibly his last even though his next fight was already scheduled

Mando Muniz "If At First You Don't Succeed" Persistence Award
Leavander Johnson, Zab Judah

Yogi Berra "It's Not Over Till It's Over" Resiliency Award
Diego Corrales (KO 10 Jose Luis Castillo)
O'Neil Bell (KO 11 Sebastian Rothmann)
Fulgencio Zuniga (KO 12 David Lopez)

Facial Monstrosity Of The Year Golden Enswell
Sebastian Lujan (vs. Antonio Margarito)

Dave Tiberi Disappearing Fighter Award
Fres Oquendo, Artur Grigorian, Irene Pacheco

Emile Griffith "Steady If Unspectacular" Trophy
Winky Wright, Juan Manuel Marquez, Roman Karmazin

Gerry Cooney Proper Pigmentation Award
Kevin McBride ■

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Marquez is Mr. Steady personified

"BEST FIGHTER" POLL

A SURVEY OF THE EXPERTS

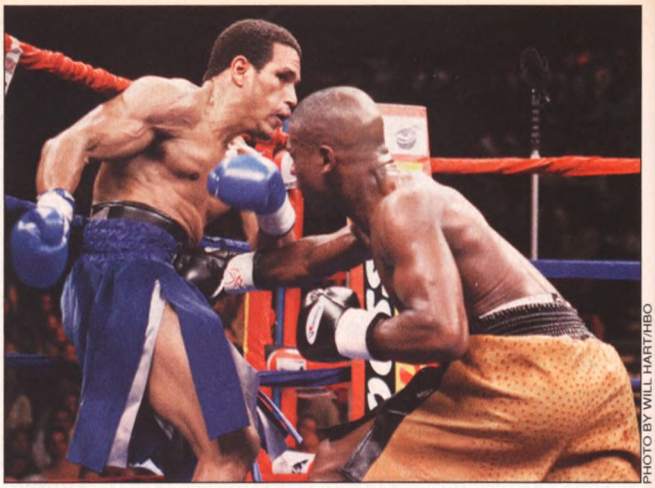


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Floyd Mayweather plunges a right into Sharmba Mitchell

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Winky Wright looks for an opening against Sam Soliman

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Marco Antonio Barrera hones in on Mzonke Fana

Mark down 2005 as another passing-of-the-torch year in boxing. In '04, we saw the departure of superstars Roy Jones and Oscar De La Hoya from the top-10 pound-for-pound list, both absent for the first time in more than a decade. This past year, two more future Hall of Famers said goodbye: Bernard Hopkins exited after being on the list every year since 1999, and Kostya Tszyu dropped out after four straight years in the poll.

For the first time, the number-one position goes to Floyd Mayweather. Gradually, the brash, unbeaten junior welterweight has been working his way up the poll since 2000. Mayweather debuted at number five in '00, rose to four in '01, dipped to six in '02, climbed to three in '03, and then to number two in 2004. Finally, in '05, "Pretty Boy" was been selected by our panel of experts as the best fighter, pound-for-pound, in the world today.

The old guard of Jones, Hopkins, Felix Trinidad, and Shane Mosley aren't even listed, though one pollster felt compelled to include "The Executioner" on his list based on his two narrow defeats to middleweight world champion Jermain Taylor.

Mayweather took the top spot by a comfortable 31-point margin over his closest rival. While Tszyu departed, his conqueror, Ricky Hatton, THE RING's 2005 Fighter of the Year, debuts at the sixth slot.

Winky Wright made his poll debut last year at fourth, and was the only fighter stopping Mayweather from being unanimously selected as the best by those polled. Wright picked up the two dissenting votes for the top spot, which earned him second place, while Marco Antonio Barrera took third. After Barrera, things got tricky. There were only 13 points separating fourth-place Juan Manuel Marquez from 10th-place entrant Antonio Tarver.

"I don't think there's any question who the top three are, but after that, you'll get some debate," ESPN.com's boxing writer Dan Rafael said. "There aren't any clear-cut answers. After Jose Luis Castillo on my list, I think the bottom four are very interchangeable."

This year's panel: ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* studio host Brian Kenny, Maxboxing.com senior writer Steve Kim, *Newark Star-Ledger* boxing writer Franklin McNeil, British *Boxing News* editor Claude Abrams, *Philadelphia Inquirer* boxing writer Don Steinberg, *Baltimore Sun* boxing writer Lem Satterfield, HBO Boxing's "unofficial ringside judge" Harold Lederman, *St. Petersburg Times* boxing writer John C. Cotey, and Rafael.

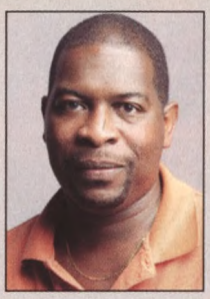
To compile the standings, we awarded points for each vote a fighter received: 15 points for a first place vote, 12 for a second-place vote, nine for a third-place vote, seven for a fourth-place vote, six for a fifth-place vote, five for a sixth-place vote, four for a seventh-place vote, three for an eighth-place vote, two for a ninth-place vote, and one for a 10th-place vote.

BRIAN KENNY

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Rafael Marquez
3. Winky Wright
4. Jermain Taylor
5. Juan Manuel Marquez
6. Zab Judah
7. Jose Luis Castillo
8. Manny Pacquiao
9. Marco Antonio Barrera
10. Ricky Hatton

"Let's be honest, it's really not close at the top. Floyd is a threat to anyone 154 and under. The Marquez brothers don't have a loss between them in five years. It was strange win for Castillo, but still a kayo win over Corrales. Pound-for-pound rankings are always unforgiving—because there is no room for Bernard Hopkins even with two razor-close losses to the new middleweight king Jermain Taylor."

FRANKLIN McNEIL



1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Winky Wright
3. Juan Manuel Marquez
4. Antonio Tarver
5. Ricky Hatton
6. Marco Antonio Barrera
7. James Toney
8. Jermain Taylor
9. Rafael Marquez
10. Zab Judah

"Mayweather is the most physically gifted fighter in the world. And he has no flaws, especially now that his hand problems appear to be a thing of the past. Forget his recent performance against Sam Soliman, Wright still possesses the best jab in the business and his defense in virtually impenetrable. It's time Juan Manuel Marquez' receive his due. Hatton's reputation has soared since his win over Kostya Tszyu."

DAN RAFAEL

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Winky Wright
3. Marco Antonio Barrera
4. Juan Manuel Marquez
5. Erik Morales
6. Jose Luis Castillo
7. Rafael Marquez
8. Jermain Taylor
9. Antonio Tarver
10. Manny Pacquiao

"It's very easy to place Mayweather number one because he's the most talented, most skilled guy out there. He's just a tremendously gifted fighter. Winky is nipping right at Mayweather's heels. You have to look at Barrera's entire resume. Juan Manuel Marquez still doesn't get the kind of respect he deserves. I won't take away 10 years of dominance from Erik Morales for fighting up in weight (against Zahim Raheem)."

CLAUDE ABRAMS

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Marco Antonio Barrera
3. Zab Judah
4. Winky Wright
5. Antonio Tarver
6. Jean-Marc Mormeck
7. Joe Calzaghe
8. Rafael Marquez
9. Ricky Hatton
10. Lorenzo Parra

"Mayweather stands head and shoulders above the rest—he's undefeated, improving, at his peak, and, most importantly, has swept aside all comers in three divisions and beginning his quest in a fourth. Barrera and Judah are dominant in their divisions, Wright and Tarver aren't exciting, but are so hard to beat, and Calzaghe has reigned for a decade."

STEVE KIM

1. Winky Wright
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Juan Manuel Marquez
4. Jose Luis Castillo
5. Marco Antonio Barrera
6. Rafael Marquez
7. Manny Pacquiao
8. Diego Corrales
9. Ricky Hatton
10. Jeff Lacy

"I put Wright on top based on his longevity and consistency. I think he and Mayweather are the two soundest boxers in the game today and the two toughest to defeat. Marquez is a guy who may be a bit high, but his skills are immense. Guys like Barrera, Pacquiao, and Corrales are there in large part because of their track record in taking on the game's best and thriving. Hatton and Lacy are newcomers who have put on strong recent performances."

DON STEINBERG

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Ricky Hatton
3. Jermain Taylor
4. Winky Wright
5. Antonio Tarver
6. Jose Luis Castillo
7. Zahir Raheem
8. Diego Corrales
9. Zab Judah
10. Antonio Margarito

"Let's talk results. It's painful to bump Bernard Hopkins, but he lost twice this year to Taylor, according to five trained judges. Undefeated Hatton beat Kostya Tszyu. Winky retired Felix Trinidad. Castillo took down Corrales in their rematch. Tarver is the most useful big guy. Mayweather is merely untouchable. And how can you not be amazed by little Zahir Raheem, after he shut down the great Erik Morales?"

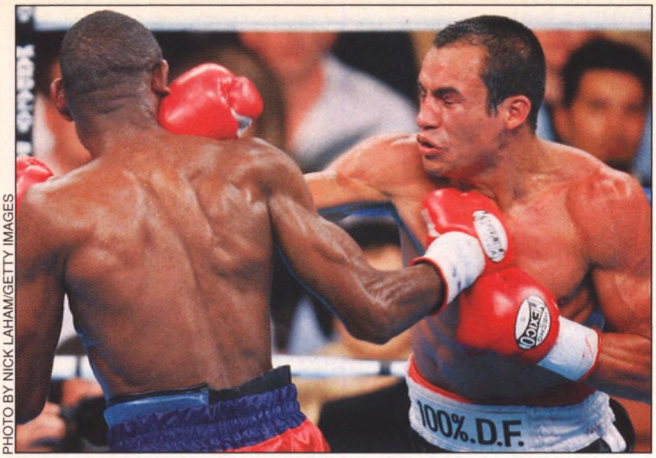


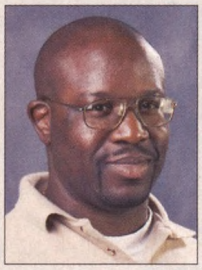
PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Juan Manuel Marquez punishes Victor Polo

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Ricky Hatton tests Carlos Maussa

LEM SATTERFIELD



1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Winky Wright
3. Marco Antonio Barrera
4. Juan Manuel Marquez
5. Jose Luis Castillo
6. Diego Corrales
7. Ricky Hatton
8. Jermain Taylor
9. Rafael Marquez
10. Bernard Hopkins

"Floyd Mayweather has beaten the best, and made a game, albeit aging, Sharmba Mitchell look like a sparring partner, which is more than we can say for Jermain Taylor. Taylor, nevertheless, makes my top 10 for having the balls to go right back at Bernard Hopkins and fight him for a total of 24 rounds. Hopkins remains in the top 10 because of his longevity."

JOHN C. COTEY

1. Winky Wright
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Marco Antonio Barrera
4. Jose Luis Castillo
5. Zab Judah
6. Rafael Marquez
7. Antonio Tarver
8. Jermain Taylor
9. Manny Pacquiao
10. Juan Manuel Marquez

"I had the top two neck-and-neck all year, but Wright gets the nod because of a perfect effort in dominating Felix Trinidad, and he handled Sam Soliman with much more ease than people give him credit for. Meanwhile, Mayweather beat a clubfighter [Floyd's words] in Arturo Gatti and an over-the-hill Sharmba Mitchell and hasn't had a win over a top-20 fighter since he edged Castillo in '02."

HAROLD LEDERMAN

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Winky Wright
3. Marco Antonio Barrera
4. Zab Judah
5. Jermain Taylor
6. Antonio Tarver
7. Ricky Hatton
8. Rafael Marquez
9. Pongsaklek Wonjongkam
10. Joan Guzman

"Floyd has speed, punching power, and overall talent. I think he's proven beyond a shadow of a doubt by his performances in the ring that he deserves to be number one. Winky is almost an impossible guy to beat. He's someone no one really wants to fight. You can't take anything away from Barrera, with his world of experience. I think he's closing in on Julio Cesar Chavez as Mexico's all-time greatest fighter."

THE RING

The RING

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Winky Wright
3. Marco Antonio Barrera
4. Ricky Hatton
5. Manny Pacquiao
6. Erik Morales
7. Juan Manuel Marquez
8. Rafael Marquez
9. Jose Luis Castillo
10. Zab Judah

"There's no questioning Mayweather is the top fighter in the world, and little doubts as where Wright and Barrera belong. The difficult speculation comes after Barrera. We decided on Hatton, who moves up from seventh to fourth in our pound-for-pound rankings, based on strong showings against previous top-10 entrant Kostya Tszyu and rugged former WBA junior welterweight titlist Carlos Maussa."

THE RESULTS

1. Floyd Mayweather—144 points
2. Winky Wright—113
3. Marco Antonio Barrera—70
4. Juan Manuel Marquez—43
5. Rafael Marquez—39
6. Ricky Hatton—38
7. Jose Luis Castillo—36
8. Jermain Taylor—34
9. Zab Judah—31
10. Antonio Tarver—30

ALSO RECEIVING VOTES

Manny Pacquiao—16
Erik Morales—11
Diego Corrales—11
Jean-Marc Mormeck—5
Joe Calzaghe—4
Zahir Raheem—4
James Toney—4
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam—2
Antonio Margarito—1
Jeff Lacy—1
Bernard Hopkins—1
Joan Guzman—1
Lorenzo Parra—1

2004 POLL

1. Bernard Hopkins—150 points
2. Floyd Mayweather—111
3. Kostya Tszyu—88
4. Winky Wright—70
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—52
6. Manny Pacquiao—38
7. Erik Morales—26
8. Juan Manuel Marquez—25
9. Felix Trinidad—22
10. Diego Corrales—11 (tie)
10. Rafael Marquez—11 (tie)

2003 POLL

1. Roy Jones—142
2. Bernard Hopkins—114
3. Floyd Mayweather—97
4. Shane Mosley—53
5. Kostya Tszyu—48
6. Oscar De La Hoya—45
7. Manny Pacquiao—38
8. James Toney—35
9. Erik Morales—31
10. Lennox Lewis—22

2002 POLL

1. Roy Jones—135
2. Oscar De La Hoya—89
3. Marco Antonio Barrera—78 (tie)
3. Vernon Forrest—78 (tie)
3. Bernard Hopkins—78 (tie)
6. Floyd Mayweather—45
7. Lennox Lewis—43
8. Kostya Tszyu—42
9. Erik Morales—25
10. Shane Mosley—13

2001 POLL

1. Shane Mosley—132
2. Roy Jones—108
3. Bernard Hopkins—98
4. Floyd Mayweather—77
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—44
6. Oscar De La Hoya—40
7. Felix Trinidad—39
8. Kostya Tszyu—34
9. Lennox Lewis—23
10. Ricardo Lopez—22

2000 POLL

1. Felix Trinidad—126
2. Shane Mosley—123
3. Roy Jones—109
4. Oscar De La Hoya—43
5. Floyd Mayweather—39
6. Naseem Hamed—37
7. Ricardo Lopez—35
8. Diego Corrales—33
9. Bernard Hopkins—32
10. Lennox Lewis—31

1999 POLL

1. Roy Jones—150
2. Oscar De La Hoya—85
3. Floyd Mayweather—78
4. Shane Mosley—68 (tie)
4. Felix Trinidad—68 (tie)
6. Mark Johnson—47 (tie)
6. Ricardo Lopez—47 (tie)
8. Erik Morales—21
9. Bernard Hopkins—16
10. Fernando Vargas—15

1998 POLL

1. Roy Jones—141
2. Oscar De La Hoya—123
3. Felix Trinidad—67
4. Shane Mosley—65
5. Evander Holyfield—55
6. Mark Johnson—45
7. Naseem Hamed—33
8. Ricardo Lopez—23
9. Floyd Mayweather—19
10. Pernell Whitaker—14

1997 POLL

1. Oscar De La Hoya—123
2. Roy Jones—117
3. Ricardo Lopez—83
4. Evander Holyfield—80
5. Felix Trinidad—65
6. Pernell Whitaker—37
7. Naseem Hamed—28
8. Mark Johnson—22 (tie)
8. Junior Jones—22 (tie)
10. Johnny Tapia—18

1996 POLL

1. Roy Jones—123
2. Oscar De La Hoya—107
3. Pernell Whitaker—92
4. Evander Holyfield—64
5. Felix Trinidad—59
6. Ricardo Lopez—56
7. Terry Norris—28
8. Ike Quartey—21
9. Azumah Nelson—12
10. Yuri Arbachakov—11

1995 POLL

1. Roy Jones—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—126
3. Oscar De La Hoya—74
4. Felix Trinidad—59
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—48
6. Riddick Bowe—44
7. Ricardo Lopez—37
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—18
9. Ike Quartey—16
10. Naseem Hamed—12

1994 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—130
2. Roy Jones—129
3. Frankie Randall—53
4. Ricardo Lopez—45
5. Orlando Canizales—39
6. Chiquita Gonzalez—38
7. James Toney—36
8. Gerald McClellan—33
9. Felix Trinidad—29
10. Kevin Kelley—28

1993 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—86
3. Terry Norris—84
4. James Toney—76
5. Michael Carbajal—39
6. Evander Holyfield—36
7. Buddy McGirt—28
8. Roy Jones—23
9. Orlando Canizales—22
10. Ricardo Lopez—21

1992 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—136
2. Terry Norris—91
3. Pernell Whitaker—85
4. Buddy McGirt—60
5. Riddick Bowe—45
6. Orlando Canizales—36
7. Azumah Nelson—34
8. Lennox Lewis—24
9. Julian Jackson—18
10. Roy Jones—15 (tie)
10. Mike McCallum—15 (tie)

1991 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—100
3. Evander Holyfield—78
4. Mike Tyson—55
5. Meldrick Taylor—48
6. Mike McCallum—38
7. Thomas Hearns—34
8. Khaosai Galaxy—25
9. Terry Norris—22
10. Simon Brown—21

1990 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—123
2. Pernell Whitaker—104
3. Mike Tyson—71
4. Meldrick Taylor—57
5. Buster Douglas—51
6. Simon Brown—27
7. Antonio Esparragoza—25
8. Michael Nunn—23
9. Evander Holyfield—21
10. Humberto Gonzalez—14

1989 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—91
3. Meldrick Taylor—61
4. Michael Nunn—60
5. Evander Holyfield—56
6. Pernell Whitaker—46
7. Ray Leonard—28
8. Jeff Fenech—27
9. Azumah Nelson—18
10. Marlon Starling—16

1988 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—144
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—118
3. Evander Holyfield—66
4. Ray Leonard—55
5. Jeff Fenech—44
6. Michael Nunn—33
7. Azumah Nelson—32
8. Jung Koo Chang—23
9. Buddy McGirt—21
10. Sumbu Kalambay—18

NO POLL IN 1987

1986 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—138
2. Mike Tyson—92
3. Donald Curry—59
4. Thomas Hearns—52
5. Edwin Rosario—47
6. Azumah Nelson—45 (tie)
6. Michael Spinks—45 (tie)
8. Evander Holyfield—32
9. Julio Cesar Chavez—26
10. Hector Camacho—22

1985 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—150
2. Hector Camacho—86
3. Michael Spinks—85
4. Donald Curry—78
5. Thomas Hearns—42
6. Barry McGuigan—32
7. Milton McCrory—25
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—22 (tie)
8. Pinklon Thomas—22 (tie)
10. Larry Holmes—21

1984 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—112
2. Aaron Pryor—77
3. Larry Holmes—72
4. Eusebio Pedroza—66
5. Hector Camacho—50
6. Jeff Chandler—47 (tie)
6. Ray Leonard—47 (tie)
8. Michael Spinks—45
9. Thomas Hearns—34
10. Donald Curry—26

1983 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—147
2. Aaron Pryor—93
3. Larry Holmes—91
4. Michael Spinks—66
5. Jeff Chandler—57
6. Thomas Hearns—45
7. Alexis Arguello—29
8. Wilfredo Gomez—28
9. Hector Camacho—24
10. Eusebio Pedroza—12

1982 POLL

1. Ray Leonard—142
2. Alexis Arguello—97
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Salvador Sanchez—72
5. Wilfred Benitez—68
6. Larry Holmes—61
7. Jeff Chandler—25
8. Eusebio Pedroza—18
9. Aaron Pryor—17
10. Thomas Hearns—14 (tie)
10. Dwight Muhammad Qawi—14 (tie)

1981 POLL

1. Thomas Hearns—116
2. Ray Leonard—108
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Larry Holmes—75
5. Alexis Arguello—62
6. Wilfredo Gomez—58
7. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—28
8. Matthew Saad Muhammad—24
9. Wilfred Benitez—18
10. Roberto Duran—13 (tie)
10. Aaron Pryor—13 (tie)

1980 POLL

1. Roberto Duran—96
2. Ray Leonard—93
3. Wilfredo Gomez—88
4. Danny Lopez—65
5. Pipino Cuevas—54
6. Alexis Arguello—40
7. Larry Holmes—32
8. Wilfred Benitez—26
9. Vito Antuofermo—25 (tie)
9. Matthew Saad Muhammad—25 (tie)

JOE CALZAGHE VS. JEFF LACY

Is This Another Classic In The Making?

By Don Stewart

With the first Diego Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo classic still lingering in our collective rearview, we lust for the next blood-and-guts battle that will make us fall in love with boxing all over again. We're probably setting ourselves up for disappointment, like when that hot blonde from the bar doesn't call as she promised. But boxing fans, like would-be Casanovas, are obviously masochists who just can't help themselves, so despite the odds against us, we eagerly await the next riveting rumble.

So let's go ahead and dream a little as we look ahead toward the Joe Calzaghe-Jeff Lacy super middleweight showdown on March 4. It's a match between two unbeaten, strong-chinned pressure fighters who are typically fun to watch. And it's easily the most important fight in either man's career.

Lacy, like Castillo, doesn't seem to know how to move in any direction but forward. Calzaghe could play the role of Corrales in that he might be a little more skilled, a little more capable of switching up and boxing. But if he decides to stay in the pocket and trade, this one could turn into the 168-pound version of Corrales-Castillo.

"It's asking a lot of anybody," Showtime analyst Steve Farhood conceded, "but it could be that type of fight."

Whether it's a blast, a dud, or something in between, Calzaghe-Lacy is still of great consequence. The winner will claim THE RING vacant super middleweight title and perhaps earn a consensus top-10 pound-for-pound ranking. Moreover, a division that's been dominated by Europeans for so many years could finally have a dominant American star atop and give the already packed neighborhood of 175 to 160 pounds at least one more major player.

Both men seem to sense the enormity of this fight, and have so for a while. With all due to respect to Denmark's Mikkel Kessler, who is ranked second at 168, these are the only super middles that matter at this point. Their match has been in the works since at least late-2004, when Lacy's promoter, Gary Shaw, claims he made an offer to Calzaghe pro-

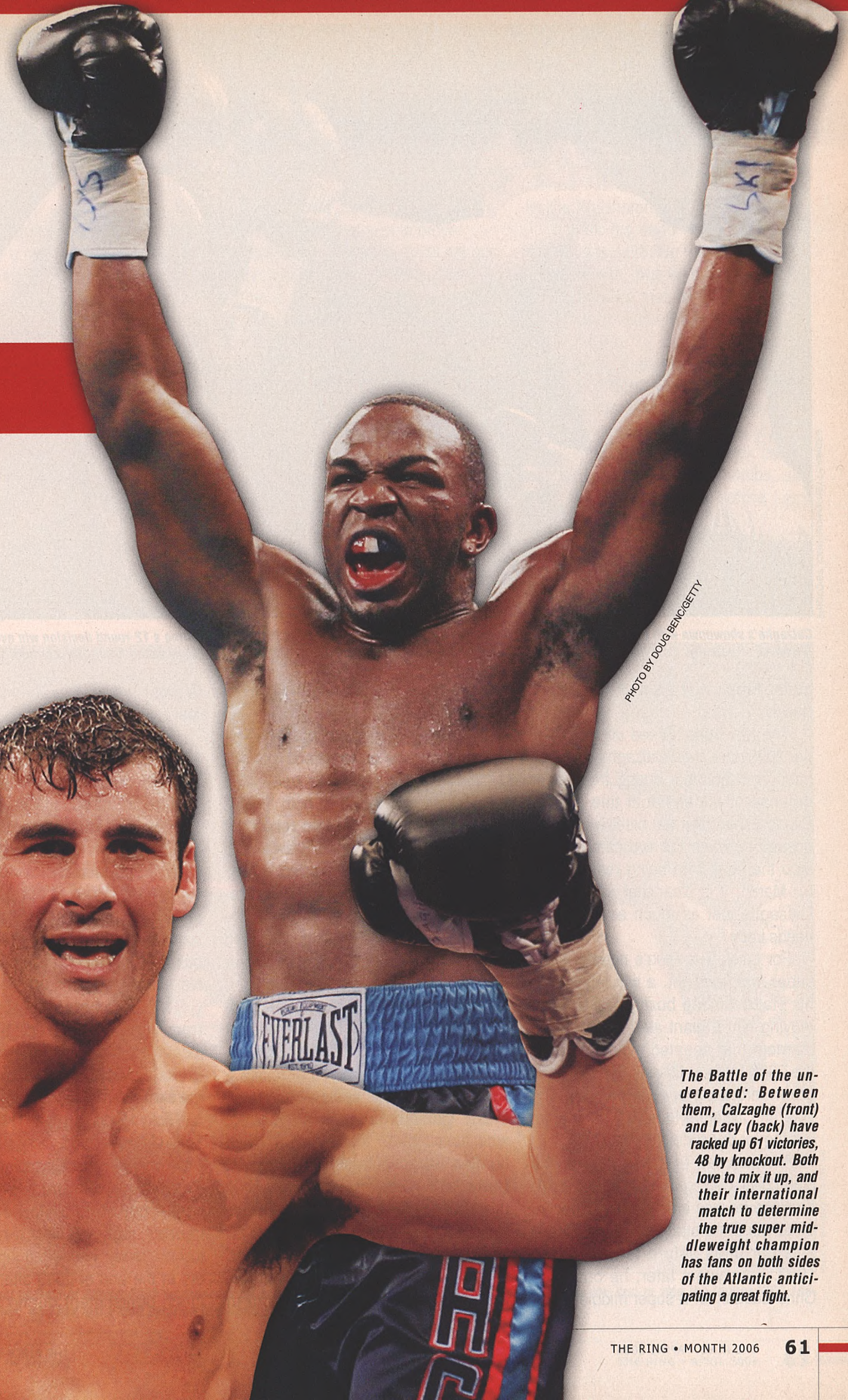


PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

The Battle of the undefeated: Between them, Calzaghe (front) and Lacy (back) have racked up 61 victories, 48 by knockout. Both love to mix it up, and their international match to determine the true super middleweight champion has fans on both sides of the Atlantic anticipating a great fight.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe's showdown with Lacy had to be rescheduled when the Welsh southpaw injured his left hand during a 12-round decision win over Evan Ashira (pictured). Originally, Lacy thought it might be a ploy to duck him, but Calzaghe is just as eager to fight Lacy as the American is to fight him.

moter Frank Warren that was turned down.

The two sides agreed on a November 2005 date, then Calzaghe broke his hand in September during a needless defense of his alphabet title against Evans Ashira. But the bitter words that ensued between the two camps didn't stop the fight from being rescheduled for March. It is clear that Lacy needs Calzaghe just as much as Calzaghe needs Lacy.

For Lacy, THE RING's number-three super middleweight, a win legitimizes his status among boxing's elite while moving him a giant step closer to the stardom that seemed inevitable after the 2000 Sydney Games. He's already grown into a big enough name for the veteran Calzaghe to say, "I have been waiting for this for eight years."

A Welshman of Italian decent, the blue-collar Calzaghe hasn't been beaten since he was a schoolboy. He went on to win three straight British national amateur titles before turning pro in 1993. Four years later, he outboxed Chris Eubank for a super middleweight belt in what was a passing-of-the-torch fight in the U.K.

While the top-ranked Calzaghe, 40-0 (31), has gone on to defend that belt 17 times, his career has been to a large extent frustrating to both himself and fight fans. He's beaten respected fighters such as Charles Brewer and Robin Reid, but never landed a marquee opponent. Calzaghe unsuccessfully called out Roy Jones for years. He came close to meeting Bernard Hopkins in 2003, but that one never materialized either. The following year, he was forced to pull out of a scheduled light heavyweight title fight against Glen Johnson due to a back injury.

But Calzaghe has been as much a victim of misfortune as he's been of an overly cautious promoter in Warren, who hasn't been too willing to yield home-court advantage. All but two of Calzaghe's 17 defenses have been in the United Kingdom. His treks to Denmark to stop Will McIntrye in 2001 and to Berlin last spring for a second win against Mario Veit (whom he'd previously iced inside of one round in Wales) weren't exactly formidable tests.

"I remember very well, about three years ago, Frank Warren bringing Joe Calzaghe to the States for a press conference to introduce him to the New York media," Farhood said. "The intention was to bring him here to fight. It never happened. For every step forward he's taken in his career, he's taken two steps back. He's very fortunate Jeff Lacy materialized. At this point, he might need Jeff Lacy more for his legacy than Jeff Lacy needs him."

That didn't stop Lacy, 21-0 (17), from agreeing to cross the Atlantic Ocean to face Calzaghe at the MEN Arena in Manchester, England. That's the same venue that drew 22,000 fans for Ricky Hatton's upset TKO of Kostya Tszyu in June 2005.

A highly touted Olympian out of St. Petersburg, Florida, Lacy saw his career get off to a slow start due to injuries, fights falling through, and inconsistency. He began juggling trainers at the end of 2003 after taking too much punishment during an eighth-

round stoppage of Donnell Wiggins (at MEN Arena, no less). Since going back to Dan Birmingham, his trainer from ages 9 to 17, in early-'04, Lacy has developed at a much quicker pace.

His two most recent wins, electrifying knockouts of Reid and Scott Pemberton, have erased some of the doubt that lingered from his two wins before that—a close points win against Omar Sheika and a seventh-round stoppage of Rubin Williams that was surprisingly competitive while it lasted.

"Look, Robin Reid hadn't been down. Big, big puncher, and Lacy went through him," said Shaw. "I think Lacy is a combination of Holyfield and Tyson. He fights with Tyson's fury in the ring, and he's on Holyfield's skill level. He's also a fan favorite. When Mike Tyson used to enter the ring, people's hearts used to start pumping. It's like the people who run outside when there's a hurricane; they want to go down near the water and see the fury coming. I think that's what Lacy brings to boxing. It's that fury. You know you're gonna see action."

While he's been exciting, what's missing on Lacy's resume is a win against a top-level opponent. Syd Vanderpool, Reid, Sheika, and Pemberton were solid, but none of them should be mistaken for Calzaghe. "Left Hook" still has a lot to prove.

He's apparently eager to fill the gap. Lacy was still a month away from going to camp when he was interviewed for this article, but the intensity in his voice made it seem as if he was ready to swim across the Atlantic to meet Calzaghe.

"I'm going over there to knock him out," the 28-year-old said. "I think there's a very good chance this fight will not go the distance. I've never been the type of person to say that, but this is the fight that tells me if I'm going to another level or not. And I'm not gonna be exposed in this fight. My career does not stop with Joe Calzaghe."

Considering that the two have a combined knockout ratio of better than 78 percent, a kayo is likely. Calzaghe can take a shot, though knockdowns in two of his last five outings have made him seem more vulnerable. Lacy feels his two-fisted power will be too much for the Welshman to handle.

"I think his style is suited for my style," Lacy said. "He might think about trying to run, but he's not a natural boxer, so if he tries to, he's gonna be trying to do something that he's not used to doing."

Naturally, Calzaghe envisions a different scenario. His southpaw style, faster hands, and caginess could frustrate the less-experienced Lacy. He could step in and fire off quick combinations to counter Lacy's bombs, and then step back outside before Lacy can retaliate.

"Fortunately, Lacy has a very aggressive style," Calzaghe said. "He comes in, looks to come forward, and pull big shots. At the end of the day,

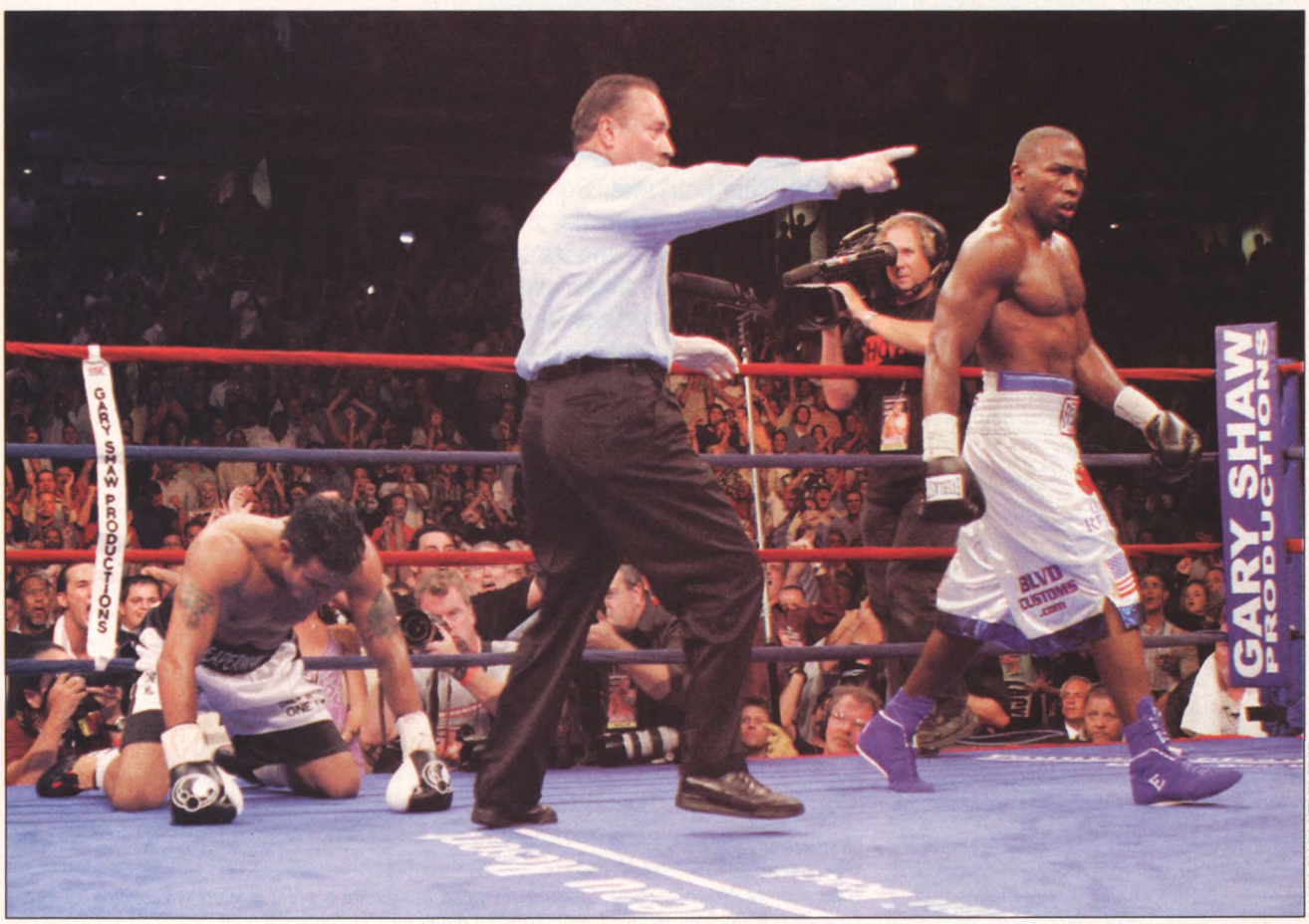


PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

Lacy's knockout of Reid in August 2005 convinced a lot of people that "Left Hook" was the real deal. He was the first to stop the former WBC 168-pound titleholder, who had lost a split decision to Calzaghe in 1999.

PHOTO BY JENS SCHLUETER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Critics think that Calzaghe has wasted too much of his prime fighting inconsequential opponents, such as Mario Veit. Having already stopped the German in 2001, Calzaghe fought Veit again in May 2005 (pictured), tallying another kayo victory, but doing little to enhance his stature.

we are two aggressive fighters, and both like to be on the offensive. It just makes for a great fight, and it is great for boxing."

Lacy and Calzaghe share a pair of common opponents in Reid and Sheika. Calzaghe won a split decision against Reid in 1999. Lacy looked much better against "The Grim Reaper" last August, dropping him four times before stopping him in the eighth. Reid had never before been dropped, and it was easily the most impressive performance of Lacy's career. Still, Reid said afterward that Calzaghe was the stronger, quicker fighter and that he would knock Lacy out.

Calzaghe was more impressive against Sheika, whom he stopped in five rounds in 2000 despite a courageous effort by the Paterson, New Jersey, native. Sheika met Lacy four years later and nearly pulled an upset, losing a unanimous 12-round decision by only two points on two of the official scorecards.

"I believe I beat Lacy," Sheika said. "Calzaghe and I got head-butted. I was beating him until that. Styles make fights. I think Lacy is stronger than him, but Calzaghe, with the southpaw stance, will give Lacy a lot of problems. We'll have to see if Lacy can catch him, because Calzaghe is a better boxer and a southpaw."

Unlike Reid, Sheika wasn't ready to pick a winner.

"It's a hard fight to pick," he said. "Lacy's tough. Calzaghe, same thing. It's hard to pick. If Lacy goes in there

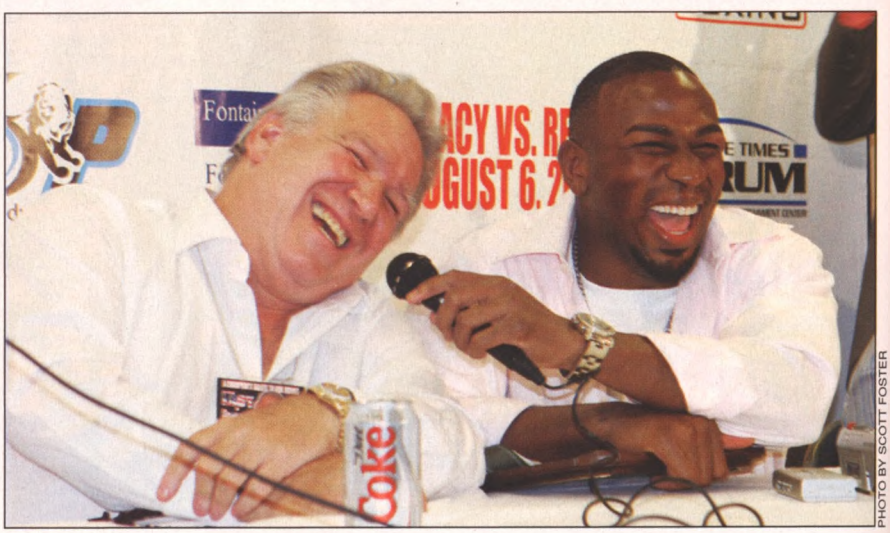


PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

Lacy and his promoter, Gary Shaw, have some fun during a press conference leading up to the Lacy-Reid fight. Both sounded very confident going into the Calzaghe bout, and Lacy predicted that by the time the fight is over, the fans at the MEN Arena in Manchester will be chanting his name instead of the local hero's.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Calzaghe salutes his loyal followers in Cardiff following his stirring up-from-the-floor TKO of Byron Mitchell in 2003. Another large pro-Calzaghe crowd is expected for the Lacy bout, but the American has already fought twice in the U.K., and says he won't be intimidated by fighting in hostile territory.

and tries to knock him out and doesn't throw combinations, Calzaghe can beat him. If Calzaghe tries to brawl, I think Lacy will beat him."

Lacy's camp claims no worries about meeting a skilled southpaw. Shaw cited Lacy's years of work with stablemate and fellow St. Pete native Winky Wright as the reason. As for fighting in Calzaghe's backyard, Lacy likes to point out that he's already had two fights in the U.K.

"I think my punching power and my determination are going to be the difference," Lacy said. "It doesn't matter where you fight. I love being the underdog and going into somebody's backyard. I like when the chants are for him and they're booing me. I think about change. At the end of this fight, there's gonna be a change of who they're chanting for."

Lacy and Shaw have repeated the catch phrase that the only "0" the undefeated Calzaghe will have after March 4 will be in his first name, and they could be right. Calzaghe has shown plenty of guts and skill over the years, getting up from his first career knockdown to stop Byron Mitchell in the same round in 2003, and outboxing Ashira with one hand after breaking it in the fourth. But this fight might have landed at the perfect moment for a peaking Lacy.

"I think there are a couple things Calzaghe has to deal with," Farhood said. "One is Lacy's aggressiveness; he doesn't let you breathe in there. Two is his punching power, which is exceptional with both hands. Three is his youth. Here is an undefeated fighter who is very hungry."

Farhood, who has worked some of Lacy's Showtime fights, said he's not as sure about where Calzaghe is mentally at this stage of his career. "I'd lean toward Lacy," he said. "Some of that is familiarity. But I think the timing of the fight is right for him. His freshness, his eagerness, and his youth are key factors."

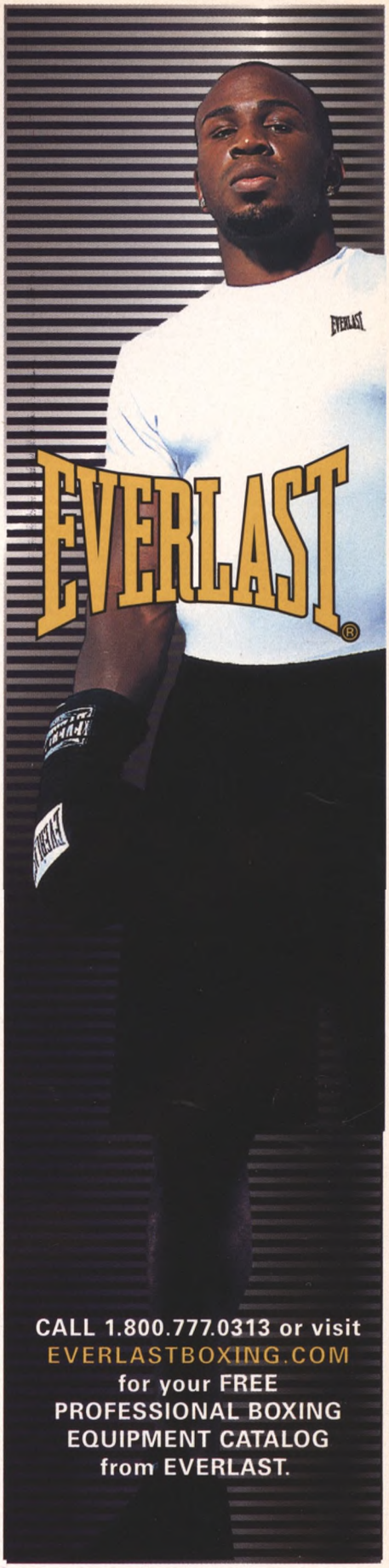
A great fight? On paper, it should be. But several scenarios could distill the excitement from this one, including another hand injury to Calzaghe or a premature cut to Lacy.

"Styles make fights," Sheika repeated. "It depends on how Calzaghe chooses to fight him. If he wants to pity-pat and box him around the ring, it won't be a great fight. But if Calzaghe decides to take chances, it could be exciting."

Let's be optimistic and assume the latter. In that case, a swollen Lacy, who is trailing on all three cards, drops the gutsy Calzaghe three times in the 11th for a dramatic TKO. It's not Corrales-Castillo I, but it's in the vicinity.

Hey, we can dream a little, can't we? ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to this magazine.



Wright is paraded around the ring after winning a surprisingly tough decision over Aussie upstart Soliman (below). How Winky's less-than-scintillating performance will affect his bid to get a crack at middleweight champion Jermain Taylor (right) remains to be seen.

TAYLOR bout in doubt

Was Soliman All Wrong For Wright?

By Ted Bodenrader
PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Gary Sheffield digs his spikes into the dirt, twirls his bat, and aims it steadily toward his adversary. Exactly 60 feet and six inches feet away, Roger Clemens eyeballs his nemesis with a steady calm, grinding his palm into the thick of the ball. For the 60,000 faithful on hand, this is the ultimate showdown between batter and pitcher, and for any true fanatic of the grassed diamond, the moment couldn't be any more perfect.

And in that sense, boxing is not unlike America's so-called pastime. In the world of fistfights, we also thirst for that crunching power, those gargantuan swings, and those piercing lasers fired toward an opponent's strike zone. So when you think of the hottest matchup that boxing's middleweight division has to offer, you can't help but think of it in terms of high-heaters and four-baggers.

On one end, Jermain Taylor bares the bulk of a slugger who, like Sheffield, can end it all with one swing. He didn't exactly knock it out of the park in his December rematch with an aging Bernard Hopkins, but Taylor may have done just enough to solidify himself as the newest

Soliman set a furious pace from the start, winging one punch after another from every conceivable angle. Wright thought that Soliman would eventually tire and slow down, but he never did, and ended up winning over many among the crowd at the Mohegan Sun.

crackerjack of the hit game. So if Taylor can be considered the slugger of the 160-pound division, then Winky Wright would certainly be its pitching ace.

Since emerging out of obscurity in 1999 like a closer out of the bullpen, Wright has since been like that imposing, flame-throwing pitcher that nobody wants to face. As long as you stand before him, he's sure to make you swing and miss. And when he's on his game, he's damn near impossible to hit.

But while Wright has amassed the respect of boxing's hardcore, in December he looked much like a guy who, at least for a night, seemed to have lost his fastball. With the boxing world bracing for a Taylor-Wright showdown sometime in 2006, the former junior middleweight king hardly served up a gem in his recent clash with Australia's Sam Soliman.

Wright didn't exactly sport a rubber arm in this affair, but his performance against Soliman, 31-8 (12), was hardly the kind of stuff pound-for-pound aces are made of.

Wright blocked many if not most of Soliman's punches with his arms and gloves. Still, in order to protect himself from Soliman's constant barrage, Wright was forced to spend far too much time covering up to impress his critics.

Not all of Soliman's punches missed the mark. He hit Wright more in some rounds than Felix Trinidad did in 12. But fortunately for Wright, Soliman doesn't hit anywhere as hard as Trinidad. Even so, Winky's face was marked up enough so that he wore sunglasses to the press conference.

"Sam Soliman fought just the right kind of fight to raise some questions as to Winky Wright's dominance in this division," admitted HBO blow-by-blow man Jim Lampley. "I think there was an underlying belief going into the fight that Winky would be too much for even Jermain Taylor to handle, and that he was indeed the man to beat at 160. I'm not so sure that is clear after tonight."

What was clear is that Winky Wright is not always the invincible force he seemed in de-sweetening Sugar Shane Mosley in their first of two go-rounds, in March 2004. Nor is he always the untouchable wizard who pitched a complete 12-round shutout over the fearsome Felix Trinidad in Las Vegas last May. In fact, when all was said and done in the wee hours of December 10, many ringside observers felt that Wright had been bested for the first time since Fernando Vargas did so in such controversial fashion back in 1999.

This distinction was reflected in the boos filling the Mohegan Sun Arena when Michael Buffer announced Wright the unanimous decision victor by margins of 117-110 (Duane Ford), 115-113 (Melvina Lathan), and 115-112 (Tommy Kaczmarek). THE RING also scored it for Wright, 116-111.

"Soliman's approach to this fight was so unusual, so unconventional, that it was enough to give Winky all he could handle," said Lampley. "When you don't have great power, and I don't believe Winky does, you can have trouble conjuring up some solid rallies."

Indeed, and it seemed that Soliman, a high-energy veteran riding a 19-fight winning streak, had figured out the perfect blueprint to at least make it competitive.

While Wright may have been preoccupied with the Taylor-Bernard Hopkins snoozer of a week earlier, Soliman seemed fully armed to attempt the unthinkable. Going in, he knew he couldn't outbox the masterful Wright. With just 12 knockouts to his credit, he also knew he couldn't bang with the tricky southpaw. So Soliman went in with a simple game plan, knowing there was but one way to make things go wrong for Wright.

"He just wanted to let his hands go, and that's exactly what he did," said Wright. "He was very awkward and he came to fight. He came out throwing a lot of punches, and I thought he'd wear out at some point. But he never did."

True, it seemed that Soliman's constant circling and relentless hand activity would run its course rather quickly, leaving him a weary target once the middle rounds came into play. But as the 32-year-old from Melbourne continued to rack up the punch count, so did the rounds on the scorecards. But while the wildly unorthodox Soliman was clearly the busier of the two, there was only one kink to his tactics.

"Most of those punches weren't landing," Wright pointed out afterward. "If you were watching closely, you'd see that most of them were hitting gloves and weren't getting in."

Still, enough were sneaking through that Wright began to look like a hurler left on the mound one inning too long, one who was in dire need of some solid relief.

The effects of Soliman's output would soon be apparent, as purplish

Wright had Soliman in trouble in the 10th round, staggering him several times with clean shots to the head after softening him up with bodyshots. But Soliman survived and was punching back at the end of the round.

knots popped out on various parts of Wright's face. Meanwhile, Wright delivered some damage of his own, ripping home bodybombs throughout the fight. One such blow set up the most convincing barrage of the night, as Wright nearly sent a dazed Soliman back Down Under late in the 10th round.

"He takes a hell of a shot," conceded Wright. "I hit him with some great bodyshots and he took 'em."

Yes, Soliman took them and somehow mustered up the gusto to fire back, as he sent home one of the best shots of the night—a crackling right—that stunned Wright in the final round.

"But he didn't do any real damage tonight," said Wright, a pair of shades concealing badly battered eyes. "All the damage in this fight, it was done to him. Trust me."

"With all due respect," Soliman barked back, "I'm not the one wearing sunglasses up here."

While Wright sported a cool pair of Ray-Bans at the dais, it is yet to be seen if he'll be wearing Taylor's middleweight title belt anytime soon. What he still possesses is the respect that Soliman speaks of, but even that was dangling susceptibly on the ropes, or at least it was for a night.

During his 36 minutes with Soliman, Wright rarely looked like an indomitable Cy Young winner. While he was never clocked with the big homerun shot, he was peppered all night with pesky singles, a far cry from the no-hitter he pitched against Trinidad.

There may be no bigger slugger in the game than Jeff Lacy, the super middleweight phenom who's proved he can hit like Barry Bonds. But although Lacy watched from the second row as Wright struggled with Soliman, he never strayed from his prefight feelings.

"Listen, Winky has been around a long time and he's paid his dues," said Lacy. "Regardless of tonight, I think he's still one of the best pound-for-pound fighters out there. There's a good chance that he still *is* the best—period."

"He's been so up and down that it's been hard to gauge what you'll get from him, "said Lampley." He looks unbelievable against Trinidad, but then not so great in this fight. He looks almost unbeatable against Mosley in their first fight, not so great in the rematch. I think what we've learned is that Winky tends to fight up to the level of the opponent."

While Lacy contends that a future showdown with Wright would be somewhat of a weighty issue, Lampley feels the scale could also be a factor if Wright-Taylor became a reality sometime in 2006.

"One thing you have to remember here is that Winky is not a full-blown middleweight," Lampley said, despite the fact that Wright weighed 171 pounds when HBO weighed him the day of the fight. "It's not like he's been up at this weight for a very long time. He's only had two fights at 160 pounds. On the

Wright talks with HBO's Larry Merchant after holding off Soliman for the 50th victory of his professional career. Even though he struggled at times against the aggressive Australian, Wright insists he wants a crack at middleweight champion Jermain Taylor next.

other hand, Jermain Taylor happens to be a very big middleweight. Those kinds of factors could surely come into play."

"I don't think that would matter, I'd still favor Winky in that fight," said Lacy. "I think it would be a lot like the Trinidad fight. I could see Jermain making a lot of mistakes in there, and Winky would make him pay for them all night."

Whether or not a Taylor-Wright fight makes economic sense is another question. The big money comes from pay-per-view, but if Wright-Soliman was intended to help build Taylor-Wright into a PPV event, it might have done the opposite.

"If Winky was hoping to stir up a public outcry for that fight, he may have come up a little short tonight," said Lampley.

Nonetheless, Wright has officially shattered the confines of obscurity, and is ready to capitalize on his newfound fame. If consecutive victories over Mosley were enough to pry apart the door to superstardom, then the shutout of Trinidad should have kicked it wide open. But beating a gate attraction doesn't necessarily turn the winner into an attraction, as the crowd of 4,982, which filled less than half of the arena, proved. Still, drawing power and his so-so performance against Soliman aside, Wright and his team are still eager to get a crack at Taylor.

"We're not interested in fighting anyone but Jermain Taylor," emphasized Shaw.

But at 27, will the middleweight division's budding star risk it all against an ace who can make you swing and miss, time and time again? The WBC is putting pressure on Taylor to defend against Wight, but as the holder of THE RING middleweight belt, Taylor doesn't really need any alphabet belt, and we could see Taylor-Wright negotiations drop quicker than a Clemens split-finger.

The evening's festivities at Mohegan Sun couldn't have had a more fitting conclusion than when Gary Sheffield, he of New York Yankees fame, came strutting into the postfight press conference, soaking in the attention of a true sports icon. An avid fight fan and also a friend of Wright's, Sheffield's presence reminded us of the power of sluggers in our games, regardless of whether the slugging is done with a padded glove or a wooden bat.

Here's hoping, at least for Wright's sake, that Taylor is ready to step up to the plate and give his number-one contender a chance. If not, it could be Winky Wright, boxing's impeccable ace, who could ultimately strike out. ■

Ted Bodenrader is THE RING's New England correspondent.

FOR SALE

The Ring Championship Boxing Belts

- **Limited Edition Belts of LaMotta, Marciano, Moore, Robinson, Ortiz and others.**
- **Expertly crafted by the makers of all the current Ring Belts.**

For further information please contact
Newport Marketing, Inc.
901 Elm Street, Colon, MI 49040
269-432-9480 Fax 269-432-9560
nptmktg@aol.com

MOVING?

Kindly give us 8 weeks advance notice

Are you moving? If so, please give us 8 weeks advance notice so we can continue to service your subscription promptly. Check the magazine(s) below to which you subscribe:

☐ BOXING 2006
☐ WORLD BOXING
☐ KO
☐ THE RING

NAME _____

OLD ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

NEW ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

EFFECTIVE DATE _____

CLIP THIS FORM AND SEND TO:
LONDON PUBLISHING CO.
P.O. BOX 2085,
MARION, OH 43306-8185

5757/09-01/4c

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

JUNIOR FEATHER CHAMPION ISRAEL VAZQUEZ

Will His Paycheck Ever Match His Ability?

By Ivan Goldman

Two heroes emerged the night Jermain Taylor edged Bernard Hopkins again—junior feathers Israel Vazquez and Oscar Larios. The spirited match preceding the main event provided as much action in less than three rounds as Taylor and Hopkins gave fans in 12.

Vazquez' quick stoppage of his long-time rival, earning him the vacant RING championship, put him in the spotlight on a big pay-per-view card. But given the hard-edged economics of the Sweet Science, Vazquez may have a rough time capitalizing on his success.

"That was a fight fan's fight," said retired Paulie Ayala, the last boxer to hold THE RING 122-pound belt. "Vazquez beat a really good fighter, and he was really effective, but that won't make him a main-event fighter on HBO or pay-per-view. It just doesn't happen that way."

Mexican warriors Larios and Vazquez earned $80,000 and $100,000, respectively, a mere fraction of the multimillion-dollar purses earned by the not-so-warlike Americans Taylor and Hopkins.

Right now the cutoff point for boxing fame and fortune seems to hover around 130 to 135 pounds, where you find the big three—Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, and Manny Pacquiao. After they migrated north from featherweight, the 126-pound class was still left with Rocky Juarez, Humberto Soto, and Scott Harrison, who have all achieved limited fame. But dip down to 122, and the top contenders after Larios are France's Mahyar Monshipour, Panama's Celestino Caballero, and Thailand's Poonsawat Kratingaengym. None of them creates ticket stampedes in the United States, although Monshipour has become an attraction in France.

Ayala has been greatly impressed by the performances of Joan "Little Tyson" Guzman. But Guzman, with one eye on the scale and the other on the cash drawer, vacated the WBO 122-pound title to challenge Scotland's Scott Harrison at 126.

A happy Vazquez celebrates as a bemused-looking Larios accepts defeat like a gentleman. Vazquez' TKO victory was part of the Taylor-Hopkins pay-per-view card and gave the Mexican his biggest dose of exposure to date.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Vazquez got off to a quick start, knocking Larios down in the first round of their scheduled 12-rounder for the vacant RING magazine junior featherweight title. It was their third meeting, with the series even at one kayo win each going into the rubber match.

When Vazquez' manager, Frank Espinoza, shopped for a promoter, he ended up signing with Scuyan, a native-American casino out in the California desert. Espinoza wasn't complaining about it, but you get the distinct feeling he'd have gone with a bigger promoter if he could have made the right deal. But putting together hot fights in the 122-pound division is a formidable chore not everyone is willing to take on, which helps explain why Vazquez, 27, and Larios, 29, took the risk of a dangerous rubber match. Each had stopped the other in previous outings.

"We're in an industry that's not paying a lot for 122-pounders," said Carl Moretti, vice president and matchmaker for Main Events, which had no financial interest in the match. "And when good ones come along, it's tough for them. Vazquez beat a good fighter in Larios. But at the end of the day, he's a 122-pound champion, and how many big paydays are out there in that weight class?"

Ayala, who, like Moretti, keeps a keen eye on the sport, said there "are some tough guys out there at 122, but nobody knows them. Nobody knows they're tough. You need known competition." That doesn't sound completely logical, since clearly every known fighter had to be unknown at some point in his career. But that's the irony of Catch-22, a universally recognized, screwy dynamic that infects much of the world's affairs. Job-seekers in Hollywood are told they can't get hired if they're not in a union. The unions tell them they can't become members if they don't have a job. Yet people do work in Hollywood and some unknown fighters do build a following. But there doesn't seem to be a set rule on how that's done. Timing is significant. Some say it's everything.

Michael Carbajal, the hugely popular light flyweight who made his mark in the 1990s, is the little-guy exception that proves the rule. He once earned a million-dollar purse competing at 108 pounds. "Sure, but Carbajal had Chiquita Gonzalez," Moretti pointed out. When Carbajal was making his mark he was lucky enough to have another polished, hard-hitting little terrier out there at the same time. Both also owned that indefinable quality called charisma. It's a matter of opinion whether non-flashy Vazquez and Larios can call on charisma. But their less-than-sizeable purses aren't a matter of opinion. They're facts indicating both are charisma-challenged.

Even charismatic figures need a marketing boost, Moretti said. "Carbajal had years and years of being built up on ESPN and NBC," he noted. Mentioning Carbajal to Ayala evoked precisely the same response. "Carbajal had Chiquita Gonzalez," he said, adding, "You need a Chiquita Gonzalez." Would Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Leonard be as well-known had there been no Joe Frazier or Tommy Hearns?

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

The defeated Larios lifts Vazquez as the warriors embrace at the end of their bout. The loss ended Larios' 17-bout unbeaten streak and was only the fourth defeat in his 61-bout pro career.

Even without a significant rival, there's another element of timing that can help fighters. "I was fortunate to get on a couple Osca De La Hoya cards," Ayala said. A media star like De La Hoya can create a rising tide of cash that lifts all boats.

So where, precisely, will Vazquez go from here? There was no rematch clause, Espinoza said. "We have to sit down and talk about what we do next," he added. "We might go after a unification bout with the WBA champ. What's his name?" The question would seem to prove a point about obscurity in the 122-pound division. The titlist in question is Monshipour. The WBO titlist, Daniel Ponce De Leon, is another possibility for Vazquez. Espinoza said his fighter makes 122 with relative ease and that they don't want to move up to 126. But if they did, they wouldn't be the first team to compete at the wrong weight in an effort to make the right money.

"They caught Larios at the right time," Moretti said. "I thought he was slipping a little bit." Espinoza agrees. Larios, 56-4-1 (36), had already put on plenty of mileage. His busy style adds to the gradual wearing-down process. Team Espinoza's confidence was no bluff, and members were astounded odds makers made their man, now 39-3 (28), a 3-1 underdog.

Vazquez, who now lives in the Los Angeles area with his family, trains with respected Freddy Roach in his Wild Card gym in Hollywood.

"Israel always had a punch," Espinoza said, "but now he's an even stronger puncher. He learned a lot from Freddy. He'd been criticized in the past for lack of defense. Now you see him doing the bob and weave, moving side to side. He's not going straight in and straight back."

Espinoza also credits conditioning coach Justin Fortune. "He's been a huge influence," Espinoza said. "Israel is a workaholic, and Justin really works him. Together, they just got him so well-prepared. Israel was so zoned that night, he just moved to another level."

The not terribly famous Vazquez is part of a Wild Card stable that includes Pacquiao and heavyweight James Toney, both of who create a buzz that can be felt a mile in every direction. It will be interesting to see whether Vazquez' dominant performance earns him more respect and attention from the gym rats.

Vazquez weighed in at 121 versus Larios' 120½. Espinoza said his fighter took the weight off gradually, coming in stronger than his opponent. He certainly fought stronger, going right after his man at the opening bell and flooring him with a superb combination. Larios beat

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Vazquez shows off some of his alphabet hardware while celebrating with his team. He will soon receive a RING belt, emblematic of his new status as world junior featherweight champion.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

Big-money bouts for 122-pounders are rare, but one possible opponent who might provide Vazquez with a decent purse is popular slugger Daniel Ponce De Leon, pictured pounding out a 12-round decision over Sod Looknongyangtoy in October 2005.

Tony Weeks' count, but he admitted later that Vazquez had rocked him. The excited Vazquez also slammed Larios with one punch too many, hitting him in the back of the head after he sank to the canvas. Weeks decided to let it go.

"Vazquez had him fighting a different fight early," Ayala observed. Hurt and thrown off his game, Larios boxed the remainder of the round to keep Vazquez off him. But his punches went wide as he tried to clear his head. With his champion's heart, he made it to the bell and fought well in the second round.

But suddenly in the third round Vazquez caught his opponent with a right-hand, left-jab combination that ripped a long, deep gash inside Larios' left eyelid. Weeks, after consulting the ring physician, called the contest over at 2:52 of the round. With Larios unable to continue because of a legal punch, Vazquez was awarded an automatic technical knockout victory.

To his credit, Larios made no excuses and took the loss like a gentleman, even lifting up his conqueror-countryman to salute the victory. Fans were denied what looked to be a repeat of their hellacious battle in May 2002. Referee Pat Russell stopped that one in round 12, ruling Larios, behind on all three cards, a TKO winner. In their first meeting, in 1997, Vazquez kayoed Larios, then undefeated, in round one. "You could see Vazquez went in this time with a lot of confidence because he knew he'd knocked him out once," Ayala said.

Vazquez, soft-spoken and determined, just needed a chance to show what he could do. What he needs now is a Chiquita Gonzalez. ■

Ivan Goldman is THE RING 's West Coast correspondent.

(Continued from Page 24)

His father, Nonito Donaire Sr., a welding foreman and former amateur boxer, has trained Nonito Jr. and Glenn since he first took his boys to the gym to protect them from other kids who were bigger and involved in gangs. But before he could get Nonito to stick his glove in someone else's face, he had to first get him to remove his thumb from his mouth.

"He sucked his thumb until he was nine," the elder Donaire said with a laugh.

Junior was more precise.

"I actually stopped sucking my thumb at 12," he said. "I was scared of everything. My first amateur fight, I literally pissed myself I was so scared. I had always been a scaredy-cat."

Thankfully, things soon changed.

"Once they hit me, I went wild and crazy," Donaire said. "I'd do this and that, and people couldn't believe it. The gloves looked too heavy on me, but once I got hit, that was it. I was faster and stronger than my opponent."

After suffering through a series of low blows in the early going against Julio, Donaire came on strong to take a unanimous decision by a wide margin.

As if his friends calling him "Flash" wasn't encouraging enough, hearing praise from a former amateur superstar and five-division beltholder only served to inspire Donaire further.

"Sugar Ray Leonard came up to me after the Viloria fight and said, 'If this is how they scored fights in my day, I would've never been an Olympic gold medalist.' It made me a better fighter. Amateur is amateur. My goal was to be a pro."

Dunkin said Donaire got off to a bumpy start under the guidance of manager Jackie Kallen after turning pro with a first-round knockout of Jose Lazaro in February 2001.

"He lost to Rosendo Sanchez (in his second bout), who was in the Olympic Trials in 1996 and who's really a 122- or 126-pounder," Dunkin said. "Nonito was light and had to put on weight."

Donaire said he's always had to fight bigger opponents to get fights. Prior to his bout with Julio, who came in at 119, Donaire was eating bananas and drinking Gatorade before tipping the scales at 116.

"He was small, and nobody wanted to do anything with him," said Dunkin "But everyone was calling me. Freddie Roach was raving about him. I got Donaire's number and called him up. He knew me and was excited and ready to go."

Even though there's usually little money to be made in the lighter-weight divisions, Donaire's diminutive stature didn't scare off Dunkin.

"Despite his weight," said Dunkin, "I thought he could be a little star like Danny Romero, who even though he was 112 pounds made a lot of money."

After hearing that, Donaire looked outstanding during his one-round knockout of Daniel Gonzalez at the Reno Events Center on the undercard of the James Toney-Dominick Guinn/Chris Byrd-DaVarryl Williamson doubleheader last October 1. In fact, he looked so good, he attracted the attention of promoter Gary Shaw who decided to watch his fight with Julio.

"I like everything about him," said Shaw, who reached an agreement with Nonito and Glenn shortly thereafter. "I like the way he speaks, the way he smiles, and his ring presence. He's an exciting fighter."

Donaire has shown some of the same skills as Floyd Mayweather, displaying the speed and instincts to be able to stand in front of an opponent and make him miss by a fraction of inch, while countering with lightning-fast punches of his own.

"He's a Manny Pacquiao type," said the ever-optimistic Dunkin. "He'll knock you dead as a door nail. Frankly speaking, that's what people want to see."

"Normally I wouldn't even look at a guy under 126 pounds, but I think he's special," said Shaw. "I'm going to try and feature him on *ShowBox* and make him better known. In a very short time I'm going to make him a star."

That would suit Donaire just fine. Along with Glenn and their younger brother, Lucky, Nonito still lives with his parents and dreams of a better future for his family.

"My only goal since I was young was to give my parents a house," Donaire said. "My parents work so hard for us, it's been such a hardship on them. I want them to have a better life."

Donaire said nothing was going to change if he makes it big. His father will continue training him, and Glenn, whom he still spars regularly ("Nobody can brawl like my brother."), and Lucky will continue to be his cornermen.

"We've never counted on anybody but ourselves," Nonito said. "All my family, my cousin, dad, brothers, we're comfortable with each other. We're in harmony. I think I can beat all the champions in my weight class. I have confidence in myself. I want to prove to everybody that I can be great." ■

Mike Houser covers boxing for the Nevada Appeal and is an occasional contributor to this magazine.

Talent, Heart, And Desire

ZSOLT ERDEI IS A RARE BIRD AMONG LIGHT HEAVIES

PHOTO BY CHRISTAIN FISCHER/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Light heavyweight Erdei cracks Mehdi Sahnoune with a right en route to his 24th consecutive pro victory (left). The undefeated Hungarian is hungry for a shot a world champion Antonio Tarver, who currently seems enamored with Hollywood after securing a part in the new* Rocky *movie.

By Brian Doogan

Antonio Tarver, during a break in filming, was clearly relishing his *Rocky VI* role. "I think the people are going to be surprised at how real this is," enthused the world light heavyweight champion, playing a "very brash, very skilful heavyweight champion," Mason Dixon, who would soon be squaring up to Sylvester Stallone in the movie's climactic scenes. "People won't know the difference between a fight with me and Roy Jones and a fight with me and Rocky Balboa. The contact, the intensity, this is what's going to sell this movie. When they say 'lights, camera, action,' this is going be a real fight."

Thousands of miles away, in the Hungarian capital of Budapest, the city on the banks of the Danube in which Zsolt Erdei was born, the 30-year-old WBO light heavyweight titleholder smiled as he read those words. "Maybe there is no difference anymore between fighting Roy Jones and fighting Sylvester Stallone," he said. "But I promise you, there is a difference between this and fighting me." The words were left hanging in the air, like the stare of Ivan Drago.

With good boxing skills and a lion's heart, the unbeaten Erdei may be the most formidable challenge facing Tarver when the 37-year-old "Magic Man" steps back from Hollywood to Bash Boulevard. Tarver had made insulting, taunting calls to Mike Tyson on his cell, but the only official response from the Tyson camp came from trainer Jeff Fenech, who advised Tarver to "leave Mike alone."

PHOTO BY JENS SCHLUETER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY CHRISTAIN FISCHER/GETTY IMAGES

Former WBA titleholder Sahnoune gave Erdei a very tough fight (above), made even tougher by the fact that Erdei entered the bout with injured ribs. But Erdei dug deep, pushed aside the excruciating pain, and punched his way back into the fight (below).

Erdei, however, shares none of Ivan Drago's ogre-like qualities. His reputation is that of a practical joker inside the Universum Gym in Hamburg where he trains, an institution that produces world-class fighters with the steely efficiency of an assembly line, and he's been amused by Tarver's recent diversions.

"I only hope that Stallone did not beat him too badly," he said, laughing.

But at the suggestion that a bout between himself and Tarver might now be what the division needs—a real fight, after the requiem for Jones and the flirtation with Hollywood—his mood changed to deadly seriousness. "Of course I would fight Antonio Tarver. I'd fight him anywhere," Erdei declared. "I will fight anyone because I believe I'm the best light heavyweight in the world.

***

The crisis began in the opening round and did not relent until Erdei pro-

duced the kind of finish that Stallone could have put in his *Rocky* movie. Mehdi Sahnoune, a one-time holder of the WBA light heavyweight title, sensed from the opening bell that Erdei's strength was not there, that the illness that had forced a postponement in hostilities from July to October and, more pertinently, the rib injury that he had carried into the bout had left the Hungarian acutely vulnerable. Intuitively, the French veteran attacked the body. When Erdei returned to his corner at the end of the first round, he told his trainer, Fritz Sdunek, that catching his breath was almost impossible. Sahnoune's shots to the body were causing insufferable pain. Sdunek, who would not have let the fight happen had he been aware of Erdei's injury (he had been in Los Angeles, preparing Vitali Klitschko for his ill-fated encounter with Hasim Rahman), told him that he had made his decision to fight, so that's what he would have to do.

"It was just my heart that kept me going," Erdei reflected weeks later, a copy of *Bild Zeitung* lying open on the table. "Zsolt Hart-Ei," the headline proclaimed. Hard egg: the German expression of awe at a man who cannot be broken.

In rounds four, five, and six he stood—barely—on the verge of a knockout defeat. Sahnoune swung wildly, desperate to achieve a finish, which looked almost inevitable. Erdei's promoter, Klaus-Peter Kohl, screamed at his man to move, to fight back, to do anything he could to survive.

"It was unbelievable to watch," Kohl said later. "You know the condition Zsolt was in, but let me tell you something, at that point *I* could hardly breathe either."

About 3,000 fans in the Brandberge Arena in the German university city of Halle were experiencing the same difficulties, for Erdei's display of defiance and courage was almost overwhelming. In his native Hungary—where he is a hero, having been world amateur champion and an Olympic bronze medalist in the Sydney Games of 2000—three-quarters of the population of almost 11 million were tuned in to the television broadcast, imploring their man to hang in there and somehow find a way to win. By moving his head almost imperceptibly at the point of impact, Erdei was lessening the power of some of Sahnoune's prodigious blows. The Frenchman has always been a heavy hitter, stopping 27 of his 31 victims before this encounter. There appeared to be little hope that Erdei would survive the storm.

"When the bell rang to end the sixth round I was badly hurt," Erdei acknowledged. "But I had got through it and I knew then that it could get no worse. Of course, I had reached a point where I did not know if I could reach the final bell, but all fighters, I think, want to have this kind of fight at least once in their career. They want to experience this kind of test and come through it."

It was in the 10th and 11th rounds that Erdei showed the qualities that distinguish him as a winner. His resilience had kept him going where lesser men would have fallen. Then, as they approached the mountaintop, he began to outpunch Sahnoune, who was weakening as a result of all the futile bombs he had thrown.

Entering the final round, Erdei had done enough to persuade the judges to have him ahead by three points on one card and by a single point on the other two. Sahnoune was still not out of it, but Erdei was in no mood to be denied. He attacked and hurt his foe until, after landing a dozen unanswered punches, referee American Joe Cortez moved in to save Sahnoune with only 43 seconds left in the fight.

"All I wanted at that moment was to see my family," said Erdei, who had tears in his eyes as he sank to his knees in the ring before he was able to hold his wife, Arabella. "Without Fritz Sdunek, I would probably have given up. The pain was incredible from the injury to my ribs, which had happened in sparring. Honestly, I could not breathe. That's why I'm really proud of the way I fought my final fight of 2005, a fight that really proved I am a fighter for the future."

***

Laszlo Papp was the father of Hungarian boxing, the winner of three Olympic gold medals in successive

PHOTO BY JENS SCHLUETER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

When he finally stopped Sahnoune in the 12th round, Erdei sank to his knees in relief, while trainer Fritz Sdunek rushed to congratulate him. Erdei said due to a painful rib injury he might have given up without his trainer's encouragement.

Games from 1948 to 1956. In 1962 he became European champion after turning professional and was never beaten, but the Communist regime forbade him to travel abroad to challenge world middleweight champion Joey Giardello, a decision that ended the hopes of a nation.

"Even today they talk about how great Laszlo Papp was," said Erdei, a warm and engaging man who lives in an apartment in Budapest, not far from the house in which he grew up, while he also owns an apartment in Hamburg where he trains. "He was a man who made the whole of Hungary very proud, a man everyone looked up to."

The young Erdei had no father figure in his life. He was raised along with his three sisters by their hard-working mother, and, as a boy developed a fascination with animals and birds especially. He has maintained this deep interest ever since, even to the point that when he first moved to Germany he learnt the German words for a long list of birds before learning anything else. For each of his fights, he walks to the ring with a song called *Madár*, the Firebird (his nickname), energizing the arena.

"I love this song. It's a song that everyone in Hungary knows and also German people know the song," Erdei explained. "It puts me in a good mood, relaxes me, and it gives me strength as well. I sing along as I'm walking to the ring. When I was a small boy, I started really to take an interest in wildlife and in birds. It's a very calming kind of hobby, very different from boxing. I read once about Mike Tyson, that he used to keep pigeons growing up in New York and he still keeps pigeons even today. I can understand this fascination he has because I too like birds and the songs they make and the freedom they have when they fly. It's a wonderful thing."

His fascination with boxing also began at an early age, his mother always supportive. Even now she supports him from ringside whenever she can. Twice he was European amateur champion and he rose to the pinnacle when he won a world championship gold. When he took home a bronze medal as a middleweight from the Sydney Olympics, he knew he wanted to turn pro, so he followed his compatriot and friend, Istvan "Koko" Kovacs, a gold medalist in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, to the Universum gym in Hamburg. He was immediately exposed to the dedicated professionalism of Dariusz Michalczewski, the Pole who was his predecessor as WBO light heavyweight titleholder, a man who made a terrific impression on him from the start.

"We all looked up to Dariusz Michalczewski, everyone in Universum. The way he prepared himself, his dedication to training, it was just the best example any fighter, any athlete could follow," Erdei insisted. "He was so accomplished as a fighter and I wanted to be like him. So I made sure that I worked hard too. I wanted to achieve what I'd seen him achieve. At least I wanted to come close."

It was ironic that Erdei's WBO title challenge came against the man who brought to a halt Michalczewski's magnificent record of 48-0, the California-based Mexican, Julio Gonzalez. The only previous defeat Gonzalez had suffered was on points against Roy Jones, and he was heavily favored against the unknown Erdei. But the Hungarian's

PHOTO BY MORITZ WINDE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Julio Gonzalez acknowledges his conqueror following Erdei's 12-round unanimous decision over the California tough guy in January 2004. In his previous fight, Gonzalez had upset previously unbeaten Dariusz Michalczewski. Both bouts were held in Germany.

skill and lateral movement paved the way to victory by the conclusive margin of 118-110 on two of the judges' scorecards and 117-111 on the other. Gonzalez was so thoroughly beaten that he did not even voice demands for a rematch.

"I'm proud of being ranked the number-two contender in the world in THE RING's rankings, but I want to be number one, so I know I need a world-class opponent," said Erdei, who has won all of his 23 fights, 14 inside the distance. "I may not be well-known yet, but that is my ambition and one day I hope to achieve this, to be recognized all around the world for being a good fighter, a fighter like Dariusz Michalczewski or Laszlo Papp. Of course, they were great fighters, so I have a lot to do. People might underestimate me, but I know what I can do. I know what I'm capable of. I look at Antonio Tarver and I believe I can beat him. All I want is that chance."

***

In Russian folklore the firebird is a miraculous bird, its feathers shining like silver and gold and its eyes sparkling like crystals. It is often depicted on a golden perch and it is said that a single feather from its tail could light up a darkened room. Boxing's firebird has much to live up to—and one day soon, he hopes, a "Magic Man" to overcome. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Nicolay Valuev W 12 John Ruiz
(*Wins WBA Title*)
Samuel Peter W 10 Robert Hawkins
Danny Williams W 12
Audley Harrison
Henry Akinwande W 12 Ed Mahone
Sultan Ibragimov KO 7
Lance Whitaker
J.D. Chapman W 12
Edward Gutierrez
Shannon Briggs KO 1
Luciano Zolyone
Roman Greenberg W 10
Kendrick Releford
Matt Skelton KO 1 John McDermott
Vladimir Virchis W 12 Michael Sprott
Egon Roth W 8 Luis Oscar Ricail
Bob Mirovic KO 2 Richard Tutaki

Cruiserweights

David Haye KO 1 Alexander Gurov
Dale Brown W 6 Dennis McKinney
Marco Huck W 8 Michael Simms
Julio Cesar Dominguez KO 3
Adolfo Trinidad

Light Heavyweights

Walter Crucce KO 2 Juan Garay
Marc Bargero KO 3 Paula Tuilau
Jiri Svacina W 10 Vitaly Mugunov

Super Middleweights

Danny Green W 10 Kirino Garcia
Anthony Mundine KO 3 Rico Nee
Robert Stieglitz KO 11
Alejandro Berrio
Denis Inkin KO 5
Valentin Antonio Ochoa
Jean Pascal KO 7 Martin Desjardins
Laila Ali KO 5 Aasa Sandell

Middleweights

Jermain Taylor W 12
Bernard Hopkins
(*Retains World Title*)
Arthur Abraham KO 5
Kingsley Ikeke
(*Wins Vacant IBF Title*)
Winky Wright W 12 Sam Soliman
Ike Quartey KO 10
Carlos Bojorquez
Mahir Oral W 8 Jozsef Balazs
John Duddy KO 3 Wilmer Mejia
Brian Vera KO 3
Jeremiah Chapman
Khoren Gevor KO 8
Gustavo Magallanes

Junior Middleweights

Sergei Dzindziruk W 12
Daniel Santos
Joshua Clottey W 10
Marcos Primera
Kofi Jantuah KO 3
Donnie McCrary
Isak Tavares W 10
Jose Claudio Da Silva
Sebastien Demers KO 4 Elio Ortiz

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN FISCHER/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Middleweight Arthur Abraham stuns Kingsley Ikeke

Welterweights

Marco Avendano KO 2
Sebastian Lujan
Souleymane M'baye KO 6
Oscar Milkitas
Ben Tackie Tech. Win 6
Roberto Valenzuela
Joel Mayo W 8 Sergey Shnip
Victor Puiu W 10 Claudio Ortiz

Junior Welterweights

Juan Carlos Alderete W 12
Victor Hugo Paz
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. D 6
Carlos Molina
Juan Carlos Ramirez KO 4
Armando Bosquez
Norio Kimura KO 2
Kazuyuki Matsumiya
Ichitaro Ishii KO 2
Jakrapet Tor Tiwanon
Michel Rosales KO 7
Manuel Garnica
Lucas Matthysse KO 2
Vicente Luis Burgo

Lightweights

Javier Jauregui KO 4 Jose Quintana
Jorge Barrios W 10 Nazareno Ruiz
Femi Fehintola W 8 Frederic Gosset
Yodsanan Sor Nanthachai W 6
Bart Abapo
Amir Khan KO 2 Daniel Thorpe
Edwin Valero KO 1 Aram Ramazyan
Kpakpo Allotey KO 2
Theodore Lokosso
Koji Arisawa KO 2
Pichitchai Gokongkarngym

Junior Lightweights

Vicente Mosquera KO 8
Walter Estrada
(*Non-Title Fight*)
Jose Rojas W 8 Osman Aktas
Masayuki Koguchi KO 7
Daichi Shibata
Guadalupe Hernandez KO 5
Luis Couoh
Sergio Medina KO 2
Sergio Rodriguez

Featherweights

Rocky Juarez KO 3
Reynaldo Hurtado
Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo W 10
Jeffrey Onate
Isidro Granados W 10
Alberto Ontiveros

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Flyweight Lorenzo Parra slams a left into Brahim Asloum

Miguel Roman KO 9 Phillip Payne
Ricardo Barrera KO 5
Romulo Juarez
Michael Farenas KO 2
Roberto Moreno

Junior Featherweights

Israel Vazquez KO 3 Oscar Larios
(*Wins Vacant World Title*)
Jose Francisco Mendoza W 12
Ernesto Vasquez
Abner Mares W 8
Yamin Mohammad
Napapol Kiatisakchokchai KO 2
Francis Miyeyusho
Takayuki Takeshita W 8
Junichi Moriya

Bantamweights

Ricardo Cordoba W 10
Yogli Herrera
David Guerault W 10 John Bikai
Damian Marchiano W 10
Pablo David Sepulveda
Francisco Paredes KO 6 Jesus Rios

Junior Bantamweights

Rosendo Alvarez KO 6
Jorge Romero
Gerry Penalosa W 10
Feliciano Ledezma
Masayuki Arinaga W 12
Waenpetch Chuwatana

Flyweights

Lorenzo Parra W 12
Brahim Asloum
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Jorge Arce KO 10 Adonis Rivas
Alejandro Ordonez W 12
Luis Doria
Francisco Arce KO 4
Julio Grimaldo
Omar Andres Narvaez KO 11
Bernard Inom
Regina Halmich W 10 Elena Reid

Junior Flyweights

Gilberto Keb Baas KO 4
Regulo Gamez
Akira Yaegashi W 10 Elmer Gejon

Strawweights

Ivan Calderon W 12 Daniel Reyes

Floyd Mayweather KO 6 Sharmba Mitchell

***Portland, Oregon*:** The ghosts of Henry Armstrong, Ray Robinson, Jimmy McLarnin, and Mysterious Billy Smith were resurrected inside the Rose Garden Arena when pugilistic artist supreme Mayweather, 147, Grand Rapids, Michigan, making his debut at welterweight, created a violent tapestry of controlled fury as he dismantled the aging but still skillful Mitchell, 145, Washington, D.C., by stopping him at 2:05 of the sixth round of a scheduled 12-rounder. The fight attracted a crowd of 5,881, of which 3,749 paid, creating a gate of $346,402.

Mayweather, 28 years old and coming off the complete destruction of Arturo Gatti in his last fight, controlled the bout from the onset, hitting Mitchell with stiff jabs and solid overhand rights to the face and body. Mitchell attempted to strike back at Mayweather, but Floyd's brilliant use of elbows and forearms and subtle twists of chin and shoulders prevented the 35-year-old Mitchell from doing any real damage.

In the second round, there was a good exchange on the ropes and Mitchell was doing his best to remain competitive. Mayweather took a moment to verbally admonish members of Mitchell's corner in between throwing combinations. In the third, Mitchell went down along the ropes from a straight right hand, but wasn't badly hurt. In the fourth, there was another good exchange along the ropes, and Mitchell was stunned twice by powerful right hands and left hooks. Mayweather snapped Mitchell's head back with more hooks and right hands in the fifth, but to the underdog's credit, he hung in and landed shots of his own. In the sixth, Mayweather caught Mitchell with a hard, straight right to the body, and Mitchell sagged against the ropes and dropped to a knee. He arose at the count of nine, but referee Richard Steele (USA) signaled the fight was over after examining Mitchell's exhausted and pained face.

"I was a little anxious," confessed Mayweather, 35-0 (24). "I was trying to perform better than in the Gatti fight, but that was a flawless performance so it's hard to better that." Mayweather seemed to be going for the knockout from the start. "Every performance I try and challenge myself. I still have room for improvement. You never stop learning. I just want to get better as a fighter and a person."

Mitchell, 56-5 (30), was philosophical in defeat. "He's an incredible fighter," Mitchell said. "He hit me with a good bodyshot and I took a knee, got up at the count of nine, and told Richard I was okay, but he stepped back and called it off."

"Mayweather is a cross between Sugar Ray Robinson and Sugar Ray Leonard," Steele said. "His defense is the best, and I know of no one who could challenge him."

HBO boxing analyst Larry Merchant feels Mayweather can be beat. "There ain't a horse that can't be rode, or a rider that can't be thrown," he offered in his distinctly poetic fashion.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions, in association with Nike's Jordan Brand and Sportsbook.com**
(11-19-05)
Oliver W. Tuthill Jr.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mayweather floored Mitchell twice en route to easy sixth-round victory

Ike Quartey KO 10 Carlos Bojorquez

Las Vegas, Nevada: If the main event of the Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins II card showed us how hard it is for a fighter to do great things in his 40s, the opening bout of the HBO Pay-Per-View telecast showed us, just as Hopkins had a few years ago, that it is not so unusual to see a fighter still going strong in his mid-30s. The unlikely comeback of former welterweight titleholder and pound-for-pound entrant Quartey continued at Mandalay Bay six days after "Bazooka" celebrated his 36th birthday, as he posted his third win of 2005 after a five-year retirement.

The victim was credible journeyman Bojorquez, who was stopped with 48 seconds remaining in the 10th and final round of an increasingly one-sided fight.

Bojorquez, 157, Mira Loma, California, via Los Mochis, Mexico, had lost four of eight coming in, and was meant to give Quartey, 155, Accra, Ghana, a somewhat easier bout than his grueling, narrow win over Verno Phillips in June. That he did, though it wasn't a complete walkover, at least not in the early rounds. In his first incarnation, Quartey had a tendency to fade and get hurt late in fights. Now he's proving much more vulnerable early, as he was battered in the early going against Phillips, and appeared hurt on a couple of occasions in the second round against Bojorquez. Quartey had dominated the opening round with his jab, but he definitely hit a rough patch in round two.

By the third, though, the African was taking over, and in the fourth, he opened a cut over the 33-year-old Bojorquez' left eye that continued to bleed throughout the fight. The fifth and sixth rounds featured some excellent toe-to-toe exchanges, but Quartey consistently got the better of them, even when he was backed up against the ropes. By round 10, the fight had long since stopped being competitive, and referee Joe Cortez (USA) decided to halt it at the 2:12 mark, even though there wasn't any particular punch that forced the stoppage.

"He was suffering. Maybe he could have stopped it earlier," said Quartey, 37-2-1 (31). "I have gotten better every fight of my comeback. I am using both hands well."

CompuBox tracked that use of both hands, and though Bojorquez, 25-8-6 (21), outworked Quartey by a 797-528 margin, the eventual winner outlanded him 269 to 74. The disparity in connect percentages was shocking, with Quartey at 51 percent, and the Mexican at just nine percent.

Quartey is looking in '06 to return to the sort of superfights he was involved in just before his retirement, when he took on Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Vargas in succession. His promoter, Lou

[The Ring Fighter of the Month] Presented by EVERLAST

Israel Vazquez

If the value of an accomplishment is measured by how rare the company it puts you in is, then Israel Vazquez' win over Oscar Larios in December was a significant accomplishment indeed. Vazquez is one of only three fighters to defeat Larios in "Chololo's" 61-fight career, and he's now done it twice. He's the only man to beat Larios in the last four years—ending a streak of 17 straight wins for Larios—and if you ignore the bogus decision Larios lost to Willie Jorrin in 2001, then this marked his first *real* loss in seven years and 28 fights.

And perhaps most importantly, the win allowed Vazquez to join the rarefied air of Ring champions. Whereas you can't walk up the steps of a boxing gym without tripping over an alphabet titlist, Ring champs are few enough in number that being one means something. Vazquez is one of only seven in the sport right now. And that he became one by knocking down, cutting, and stopping 3-to-1 favorite Larios makes it that much more noteworthy.

And what a perfect first name he has. When it comes to title claimants at 122 pounds, only one is real—and it's Israel.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Quartey spears outclassed Bojorquez with a left jab

DiBella, is hoping to line up either Winky Wright, Vernon Forrest, the Vargas-Shane Mosley winner, or possibly De La Hoya again.

Promoters: **Golden Boy Promotions, DiBella Entertainment**

(12-3-05)

Roberto Vasquez W 12 Nerys Espinosa

Panama City, Panama: Two title defenses. Two knockdowns suffered. Two impressive wins.

WBA light flyweight titlist Vasquez has now tasted the canvas in each of his first two defenses, but just as he did against Jose Antonio Aguirre three months earlier, "La Arana" ("The Spider") rallied from an early knockdown to prevail against little-known Nicaraguan Espinosa. In front of a hometown crowd at the Figali Convention Center, Vasquez, 108, went down, got up, scored a knockdown of his own, and won via unanimous decision after 12 entertaining rounds.

In the third round, "Macho Man" Espinosa, 108, floored Vasquez, creating a moment of déjà vu for the titleholder and his faithful fans, who had watched the same thing happen in the second round against Aguirre. But the 22-year-old southpaw recovered and rallied, and after controlling most of the ensuing rounds, he put Espinosa down in the 10th with a bodyshot. The 24-year-old challenger beat the count of referee Rafael Ramos, but he was hopelessly behind and unable to produce the dramatic knockout he needed to take the title.

Judge John Poturaj scored it 118-110, Ruben Garcia had it 117-110, and Jesus Cova saw it 118-107, all for Vasquez, 21-1 (17). The defeat snapped an 11-fight win streak for Espinosa, 16-3 (12) with 1 no-contest.

After the fight, Vasquez said he'd be interested in an alphabet unification match with 2000 U.S. Olympian Brian Viloria, followed by a move up to the talent-packed flyweight division.

(11-19-05)

Sergej Dzindziruk W 12 Daniel Santos

Magdeburg, Germany: The brothers Klitschko were the first to blaze a trail from Ukraine to the Universum gym in Hamburg, Germany, and gain international acclaim, but Dzindziruk, 154, St. Nizhnegorsk, Ukraine, could be on the same track. The 29-year-old, now living in Hamburg, near to Wladimir Klitschko (who was on the same boxing team as Dzindziruk in their youth), was strong and determined and showed the necessary guile and class to upset Santos, 154, Bayamon, Puerto Rico, and claim the WBO junior middleweight title by unanimous decision at the Bordelandhalle. Santos, 30, was making his fifth defense of the belt.

The Puerto Rican had previously held the WBO welterweight title, winning it by split decision in 1999 against Ahmed Kotiev, who was also a Universum fighter, so there was an element of vengeance in Dzindziruk's victory. There was also prefight controversy when WBO President Francisco Valcarcel refused Santos the customary titleholder's prerogative to choose the gloves he wanted to wear, a pair of 10-ounce Reyes gloves. "We feel that as the champion, Daniel has earned the right to choose," said representative Juan Gonzalez, though Santos insisted in the end that he was not bothered: "I've fought title fights in Italy, twice in England, this is my third in Germany. I'm very confident."

But confidence was not lacking in Dzindziruk either, and this ensured a high-paced, exciting bout throughout. The European champion and also Santos' mandatory contender, Dzindziruk established his authority from the outset, refusing to give his fellow southpaw the opportunity to box at his rhythm. The exchanges were full-blooded, and Santos seemed surprised by Dzindziruk's resolution and ability. Particularly effective was the unbeaten Ukrainian's jab, which Santos had no real answer to.

In the eighth round, Dzindziruk countered perfectly with a right hook to the jaw, and Santos, 29-3-1 (20), went down. He had no problem beating referee Genaro Rodriguez' count, but this knockdown would be decisive, for the fight was always close and it gave Dzindziruk, 31-0 (21), renewed belief over the final four rounds. But he had to survive a terrific left hook in the 11th, Santos landing flush on his chin, as the two fight-

ers staged a thrilling finish to a pulsating contest. Both fighters threw up their arms at the final bell, but Santos must have suspected that, especially on foreign land, he had not quite done enough.

The three judges scored the bout the same, Dave Parris (England), Joachim Jacob (Germany), and Michael Pernick (Denmark) all seeing it 115-112 for Dzindziruk. THE RING scored it the same way, seven rounds to five with the eighth-round knockdown giving the Ukrainian the cushion of an extra point.

Gifted and mentally strong, Dzindziruk's challenge now is to make the kind of impact at junior middleweight that his compatriots, the Klitschkos, have made in recent years at heavyweight.

Promoter: **Universum-Box**
(12-3-05)
Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN FISCHER/GETTY IMAGES

Dzindziruk twists Santos' head with a right

Oleg Maskaev W 12
Sinan Samil Sam

Hamburg, Germany: Officially sanctioned by the WBC as a final eliminator for the title bestowed upon Hasim Rahman following Vitali Klitschko's retirement, this bout's significance was clear. At least, it should have been. Maskaev, 235½, Staten Island, New York, via Kazakhstan, survived shaky moments in the fourth and sixth rounds before securing a wide, unanimous decision over former European champion Sam, 246, Hamburg, Germany, via Turkey, at the Sporthalle. Victory brought him the WBC International title and, more importantly, the promise of first crack at Rahman, an agreement that ought to have been ratified by the WBC a week later. But not for the first time where Senor Sulaiman and his committee are concerned, the rules were broken by the very people who established them, and James Toney was anointed mandatory challenger to Rahman in Maskaev's place.

As number-one contender, Maskaev understood the magnitude of a fight against the man ranked number two. But the WBC, who arbitrarily promoted Toney from number five, apparently did not. "Only in boxing does kindergarten math not work," said a disgusted Dennis Rappaport, Maskaev's promoter. Six years ago, Maskaev recorded a brutal knockout victory over Rahman, exacerbating his disenchantment at being denied a rematch. Though he certainly hadn't done enough in recent years to deserve the number-one ranking, the WBC put him there, and then demonstrated the lunacy of their own rankings by refusing to stand by them. "I can't understand how it's an elimination bout one day and the next day it isn't," said Maskaev, 32-5 (25).

"The Big O" was always in control against Sam, boxing cleverly behind a solid jab and firing in hard hooks that kept "The Bull Of The Bosphorus" at bay. His defenses were good against any attacks that Sam mounted and he countered well whenever his opponent opened up. A hard, straight right in the opening round pushed Sam back, and he was mostly on the defensive from this point.

A combination of blows in the fourth, as Sam's swinging shots finally got through with force, hurt Maskaev, and the Kazakh was unsteady again in the sixth, Sam's best rounds. But from then on, the 36-year-old veteran dominated, outboxing an opponent who showed no imagination or inclination to deviate from his one-dimensional strategy. A former world amateur champion, the 31-year-old Sam, 24-3 (15), showed a distinct lack of guile and quality. He was even deducted a point by American referee Frank Garza in the 11th round for a headbutt, crudely confirming his frustration at being so comprehensively outboxed.

Daniel Van De Wiele (Holland), Bob Logist (Belgium), and Chuck Hassett (USA) scored it 118-109, 118-111, and 116-111 respectively, all for Maskaev. THE RING also scored for Maskaev, 118-109.

"I already have a knockout victory over Rahman and I want the opportunity to fight him again," said Maskaev. "I deserve a shot at the belt."

Promoter: **Wilfried Sauerland**
(11-12-05)
Brian Doogan

Johnny Nelson W 12 Vincenzo Cantatore

Rome, Italy: As a youngster, he used to cower in the corner whenever his trainer, Brendan Ingle, put him in the ring to spar, but Nelson, 198½, Sheffield, England, has long been one of the most formidable cruiserweights in the world. At 38, however, his powers may be on the wane, his reflexes not quite what they once were. Against Cantatore, 199¼, Rome, Italy, he was knocked down in the ninth round and hung on to win a split decision at the Palazzo dello Sport and later declared that he will not fight again unless the price is right, acknowledging also that he still seeks a "career-defining fight."

PHOTO BY GIULIO NAPOLITANO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Nelson (right) had enough left at age 38 to edge Cantatore

The emerging Enzo Maccarinelli of Wales is being maneuvered to face him, but Nelson is as shrewd and calculating outside the ropes as he is inside, and his postfight comments were a reminder to promoter Frank Warren that the right remuneration will be required if he is to put his reputation on the line. Cantatore, 30-4-1 (27), threatened to present a serious obstacle, particularly on home turf, and Nelson's 13th defense of the WBO cruiserweight title was not plain sailing. But his relief quickly yielded to bombast when he was interviewed in the ring for British TV network ITV. "It was the easiest fight I've had in ages," he said. "That was a total cruise."

In the early rounds, certainly, he was assertive and in control. The action was very measured, but Nelson's ring generalship swayed the rounds his way. He landed a good left-right combination to Cantatore's head at the end of the second and kept the Italian on the defensive in the third. But Cantatore, 34, whose only defeats in the past eight years had come against Zeljko Mavrovic in a European heavyweight title challenge in 1996 and against Wayne Braithwaite three years ago in a WBC cruiserweight title fight, responded in the fourth, landing a solid uppercut. Nelson taunted him by exaggerating its effect, smiling as he feigned wobbly legs. But the partisan crowd and Cantatore were encouraged.

The beltholder maintained the pressure in the fifth, Nelson at one point pushing Cantatore to the floor, and by the eighth, the Italian was heavily marked under both eyes, Nelson's pinpoint punches taking their toll. Cantatore came back strongly in the ninth and floored Nelson with a right hand high on the head. "It was a cracking shot, but I was more embarrassed than anything," said Nelson. "I hung on like a limpet and did what I should have done."

But Cantatore closed the fight strongly, the knockdown and his superiority in the final rounds narrowing the early advantage Nelson had established on the scorecards. German judge Joachim Jacobsen thought he had even done enough to win, scoring 115-112 for the challenger, but Larry Hazzard Jr. and Melvina Lathan, both from the United States, saw it for Nelson by scores of 115-112 and 116-111, respectively. THE RING also scored for Nelson, 115-113.

"It was like boxing in the lion's den, but I love that," said Nelson.

Promoters: **Sport Promotions, Sports Network**

(11-26-05)

Brian Doogan

Juan Lazcano KO 9 Courtney Burton

Chicago, Illinois: The Aragon Ballroom rumbled with the crowd's roar as the vanquished Burton slumped on the canvas in a corner of the ring. After nine frustrating rounds, Lazcano dramatically bludgeoned his swarming tormentor to the ground, pushing himself back into the title mix in his second fight back after a 14-month layoff.

Lazcano's trainer, Freddie Roach, said, "I kept asking him to keep him on the end of the jab and back him up, but easier said than done. He was fighting Courtney's fight … he finally got some distance and he knocked him out."

After a cautious first round, Burton, 139, Benton Harbor, Michigan, unleashed a mauling attack, maintaining a withering work rate and smothering Lazcano's punches. Alternatively winging blows to the head and body, grappling like a Greco-roman wrestler, and driving Lazcano, 141, El Paso, Texas, backward, Burton made

the taller Lazcano fight on his terms, on the inside, with Burton leaning on him.

And fight he did. Heavier handed and a more economical puncher than Burton, "The Hispanic Causing Panic" repeatedly ripped double, triple, and quadruple hurtful hooks to Burton's body and occasional jarring shots to the head.

At one point in the fifth, as the two slugged and wrestled at close quarters, Lazcano, 30, dug a heavy left to the beltline, prompting Burton, 27, to yell, "Low, low!" "That wasn't low," quipped one of the timekeepers. It just hurt and, along with the other body blows, was sapping his strength.

Regardless, Burton maintained a superior work rate, unloading three or four punches to Lazcano's one. In between rounds six and seven, Lazcano's wife implored, "Juan, wake up! You're giving the fight away!"

Suddenly, in the ninth round of a scheduled 10, Lazcano, 35-3-1 (27), found room to punch and battered Burton with lefts and rights, ending matters with a whistling left hook to the head. Referee Tim Adams (USA) counted Burton, 21-5 (11) with 1 no-contest, out at exactly 1:00 of round nine. It was Burton's fourth knockout loss in his last five fights.

Television: **Telefutura**
Promoters: **Dominic Pesoli's 8 Count Productions, Golden Boy Promotions**
(11-11-05)
Juan C. Ayllon

Chad Dawson KO II Ian Gardner

New Haven, Connecticut: American super middleweights worth getting excited about have been far from abundant in recent years, but suddenly, they're everywhere. There's Jeff Lacy, of course. In early-November, Allan Green entered the mix explosively with a sensational 18-second blowout of Jaidon Codrington. And two weeks later, Dawson made it a triumvirate of young American 168-pounders to pay close attention to, dominating the tricky Gardner in front of a hometown crowd at the Greater New Haven Athletic Center.

Southpaw Gardner, 163, Brockton, Massachusetts, had produced frustrating nights for most of his 21 previous opponents, but he was completely ineffective against fellow lefty "Bad Chad"—a factor owed partially to Dawson's talent and poise, and partially to the discrepancy in size. Dawson weighed in 3¼ pounds heavier than Gardner, who was a junior middleweight as recently as November '04, and the 6'3" Dawson stood four inches taller than his foe. And he put his physical advantages to good use, controlling Gardner behind his long jab, staying out of "The Cobra's" striking range, and stepping up, hurting Gardner when opportunities presented themselves, and dropping him four times en route to a stoppage win at 1:12 of round 11.

Gardner, 24, may have won the first round, but that was the only one you could really give him. Dawson, 23, mixed his attack to the head and body, and by the sixth round, it was clear that the light-hitting Gardner was losing his passion for the uphill battle. He needed to stay off the ropes, but as he fell farther behind, he grew more careless, and with about a minute to go in the eighth, Gardner paused on the ropes and got caught with a powerful right hook. A right and a left followed, and Gardner slipped awkwardly to the side and touched a glove to the canvas to stay up, assuring himself a count from referee Michael Ortega (USA).

In the ninth, Gardner fell through the ropes—it was ruled a slip—and showed he still had some energy left by executing a breakdancing-style backspin en route to regaining his feet. Unfortunately, he showed none of that same spunk when the action resumed, and by the 11th, he was ready to be taken. Dawson, 20-0 (14), dropped him for a four-count with a right-left combination 20 seconds into the round, and a five-punch combination soon dropped him again. When Gardner, 19-3 (7), rose, he was greeted by a right jab and a left cross that put him down again, and Ortega immediately waved off the uncompetitive bout.

"My jab controlled the fight," said Dawson. "I give a lot of credit to [trainer] Dan [Birmingham], who convinced me to stick with the jab, and it worked."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**
(11-18-05) ■

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

The ref directs Dawson to a neutral corner as Gardner slumps to the floor

August 1938

COVER STORY: "Two Of A Kind" Despite C.R. Schaare's illustration of Tony Galento that graced the cover, the only article that mentions "Two Ton" Tony is one by writer-illustrator Bob Edgren that lumps the rotund heavyweight together with reigning double champion Henry Armstrong. Even at the time, the comparison must have struck readers as farfetched. After all, Armstrong held both the featherweight and welterweight world titles, while Galento was the number-four heavyweight contender. The timing for featuring Galento on the cover was even more unfathomable when you consider that Armstrong had just taken the 147-pound title away from Barney Ross and was only one fight away from winning the lightweight belt to be come the only man in history to hold three world titles simultaneously.

World Champions

(for the period ended June 11, 1938)
Heavyweight: Joe Louis
Light Heavyweight: John Henry Lewis
Middleweight: Freddy Steele
Welterweight: Henry Armstrong
Lightweight: Lou Ambers
Featherweight: Henry Armstrong
Featherweight: Freddie Miller
Bantamweight: Sixto Escobar
Flyweight: Benny Lynch

"Armstrong's Feat Unique In Boxing" Editor Nat Fleischer compares "Hurricane Henry" to great black boxers of the past such as George Dixon, Jack Johnson, and the original Joe Walcott. Fleischer also provides his take on the Ross fight, writing: "By his one-sided victory over Ross, Armstrong gained a niche in the Fistic Hall of Fame as one of the greatest fighters of all-time. Until that feat was accomplished, there was considerable doubt about his true status, but Henry answered that by giving Barney the worst beating a champion has received in many moons."

Ross congratulates Armstrong after losing the welterweight title

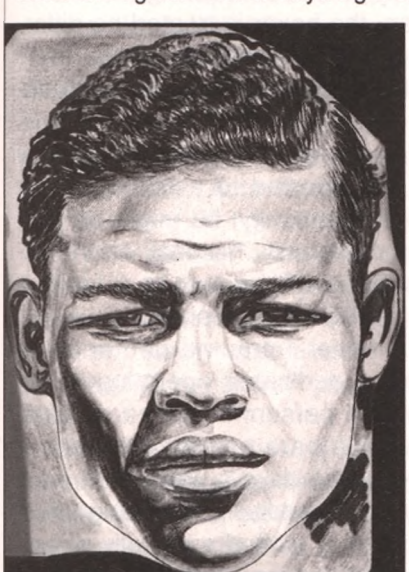
"Hurricane Henry" Came Up The Hard Way" Ted Carroll wrote a piece concentrated on Armstrong's early years and his rise to the top. Carroll, the first African-American to contribute THE RING on a regular basis, also drew a full-page illustration, featuring 15 events in the boxer's life that led up to his annexing the welter title, starting with little Henry selling newspapers at age seven, and climaxing with his victory over Ross.

"Max Looks Back" With the rematch between Max Schmeling and heavyweight champion Joe Louis rapidly approaching, writer Hype Igoe interviews the German in an insightful piece. For example, consider Max's reply when asked if commercialism has taken some of the romance out of boxing. "I hardly think so," said Schmeling. "In the

Schmeling is sandwiched between manager Joe Jacobs and promoter Mike Jacobs (no relation to Joe)

old days they fought for what they called glory. I suppose that by glory they meant achievement without much pay. That was not best for boxing."

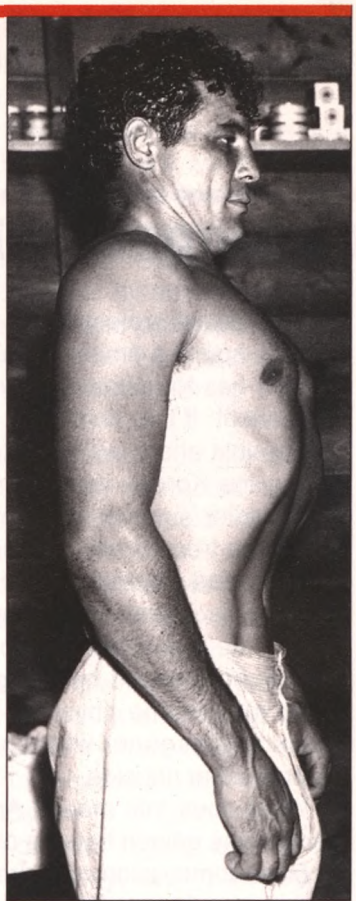
"Joe Louis Deplores Lack Of Schooling" Lester Bromberg explores Louis the man, as opposed to Louis the fighter. The heavyweight champ's lack of education, however, is just one topic Bromberg probes. Louis talked quite a lot about his mother and the sacrifices she made for her children: "When I dropped my job to train for the Golden Gloves, she paid my gym dues—$5 a month. She had to work hard for the money. She went out and got house cleaning jobs at $1.25 a day. She's always been like that for everybody in the family. Down South, when I was just a little kid, one of my sisters wanted to go to nursing school in Birmingham. My mother sent her, but she worked herself sick to do it."



Ted Carroll's illustration of Louis

"Baer Stands Out For Next Battle" This particular issue was put together prior to the Louis-Schmeling rematch, but would not hit the newsstands until after the fight. Therefore the editors were caught in a bind, trying to compensate for the lead-time involved in publishing a monthly magazine with some creative guesswork. Fleischer lead off by writing, "With the Schmeling-Louis fight over, the roar of the crowd died out, the blast of the ballyhoo down to a whisper—what's next on the program?"

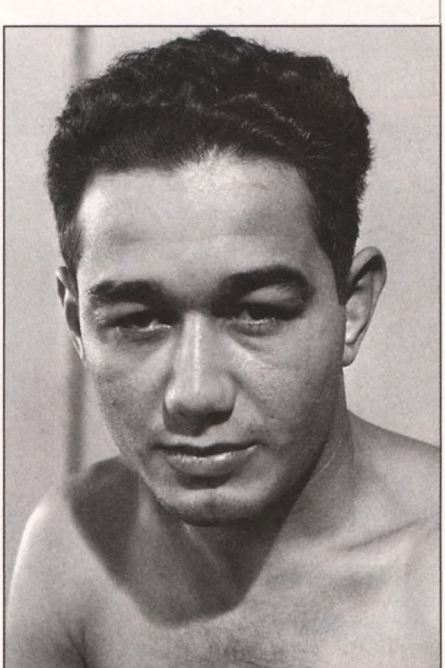
Judging by the headline and most of the copy, it seems that Fleischer figured Schmeling would win again, because Louis had kayoed Baer in '35, and a rematch would not have generated much interest. On the other hand, Baer had stopped the German in '33, so had Schmeling beaten Louis a second time, a Max vs. Max title bout would have been a blockbuster.



Baer sucks in his gut

"The Kayo Kid Comes Back" Bantamweight K.O. Morgan is profiled by Jack Senn shortly after Morgan (real name Antonio Esposito) upset bantamweight champion Sixto Escobar. A spindly southpaw with "amazingly fast and clever hands," Morgan turned pro in 1928, and 10 years later he decisioned Escobar in a non-title fight. He got another shot at Escobar the following year in Puerto Rico with the 118-pound title on the line, but lost a unanimous 15-round decision.

"New Faces" Just like today, not every fighter featured in "New Faces" ends up having a successful career. Case in point: Primo Flores, one of five up-and-comers highlighted in this issue. Flores was undefeated in a handful of pro bouts at the time, but ended up with a 24-19-4 (13) record when he retired in 1943. ■



Bantamweight champion Escobar

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Emergency Management In Boxing

Medical professionals say there is "the golden hour," a limited time period that a physician has to restore life functions quickly to a trauma patient. If that window is missed, fatal damage or irreversible shock will occur. This concept originated during the Korean War when physicians determined that soldier survivor rates improved considerably if they were treated within an hour of being wounded.

Increased awareness in ringside emergency management is improving and severe acute injuries continue to be rare. According to the Professional Boxing Safety Act passed by Congress in 1996, commissions require one physician and an ambulance and medical personnel with appropriate resuscitation equipment at ringside.

What does this mean? And is it enough to make certain "the golden hour" is observed?

Most commissions require at least two physicians at ringside. At a small venue, this is usually enough, but at a larger venue, at least four should be present with protocols in place as to their duties. Ambulance companies supply EMTs (emergency medical technicians) and paramedics. Irrespective of the ringside physician's specialty, it is imperative to have at least one paramedic. EMTs have approximately 70 hours of training, whereas paramedics have more than 600. Paramedics can also administer drugs and secure an airway, both of which are often lifesaving measures.

According to former ring physician and Association of Boxing Commission Vice President Dr. Flip Homansky, "There is a special aspect of medicine that covers being a ringside physician. It includes understanding head blows, evaluating lacerations, and knowing the difference between when a fighter is tired and when he's lost the ability to protect himself. Once a fighter is hurt, however, he is no longer a boxer. He is an individual who has sustained trauma and needs stabilization and intervention. The doctor needs to act as ring physician *until* the fighter shows signs of trauma. Then, the boxer is treated no differently than someone in a motor vehicle accident."

Does it matter where the injured fighter is transported?

If the fight is held in a rural setting, the boxer may be transported to a clinic; if in a small community, he might be sent to a community hospital; and if fortunate he will be sent to a Level 1 or Level 2 trauma center.

A Level 1 trauma center must have a dedicated operating room, surgical personnel, and a surgical intensive care unit for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. In addition, the designation requires a staffed surgically directed ICU service, in-house CT/MRI imaging, and dialysis capabilities. A Level 2 may have the same clinical capabilities, but may not include training programs and specialized units.

Recent studies have shown that a patient has an 8-10 percent increased chance of survival if taken to a trauma center as opposed to an emergency room. This is believed due to the trauma center having organized critical care services and immediate access to

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Klitschko received prompt medical attention following TKO loss to Lamon Brewster

equipment needed for diagnostic testing not always available in an ER.

Furthermore, in the October 2005 issue of *Annals Of Surgery,* the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine, compared outcomes of more than 12,250 patients with critical injuries. They found that the trauma patients had a nearly 20 percent better chance of survival in a Level 1 center than a Level 2 center.

On April 10, 2004, immediately following neurological assessment of Wladimir Klitschko after his seventh-round stoppage by Lamon Brewster, Klitschko was transported to Las Vegas University Medical Center, a Level 1 trauma center. Trauma surgeon Dr. John Fildes, the center's director and recently appointed national chairperson of the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma, opened the doors to the facility to provide easy access for the ambulance, the CT scanner was cleared, and the on-site surgical staff was alerted all within a matter of moments, so that when the fighter arrived everything was ready. Luckily, other than sustaining a concussion, Klitschko was fine, but it was an excellent example of how things *should* work.

Dr. Fildes applauded the level to which other sports like NASCAR and the Indy Racing League (IRL) go to protect their participants, and thought there was much that could be instructive to boxing. Racing accidents are carefully observed on video and by on-board data recorders. According to Championship Auto Racing Team (CART) orthopedist Dr. Terry R. Trammell, "We have a human laboratory." Years of analyzing crash and injury data enable motor sports physicians to closely predict how severe a driver's injuries will be as a crash occurs. As a result, safety modifications are often instituted immediately rather than later. Boxing must follow this lead.

Over the years, boxing has at its fingertips a large amount of data regarding acute injuries. But, with no league or federal commission, information that might just save the life of a fighter in the future is left untouched. No one person is to blame, but if we don't start making changes in providing better emergent diagnosis, treatment, and care, we have no choice but to blame ourselves.

***

On November 28, 2005, boxing lost Everlast owner George Horowitz to cancer. It is difficult to describe how much a person meant to your life without you having never met them. But if you love boxing and have respect for the sport, you would immediately recognize the repercussions of his death.

George never backed down from speaking out on injustices in the sport, even if it affected his relationship with other powerful boxing entities. To him, the fighter always came first.

Dr. Homansky and I first met George and his son Seth, now Everlast CEO, when we were putting together our book, *Ringside And Training Principles.* Our original intent was to enlist Everlast's participation in a section on boxing gloves. George, however, immediately offered much more. By donating funding and equipment for amateurs and professionals, he helped us conduct seminars for fighters on everything from concussions to dehydration to training techniques.

My last contact with George was a couple months ago when he called me because he wanted my help with a boxer whom he believed should no longer compete. I'll never forget the call.

"Margaret," said George, "I am so worried about this kid. He hasn't fought in a few years, needs money, called me for special trunks, but he has slurred speech and can't remember he called me three times in the last 24 hours asking the same question. He is in trouble, and we have to help him."

Together, we worked to help this young man. That was George, and it saddens me to contemplate his absence. Still, George's gift and legacy, besides his wonderful children and company, is that we should each learn from his selfless dedication to the sport and use his memory to reach out and help the family of boxing. ■

Horowitz with Jameel McCline

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Hopkins Robbed ... Again!

After watching the rebroadcast of the Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins rematch, I came away with the impression that Hopkins won the fight. He displayed more consistent offensive and defensive skills throughout the fight, and clearly dominated the inside fighting. Taylor constantly held and threw very few punches on the inside. The referee should have let them fight through the clinches. If he had, I believe that it would have resulted in very decisive victory for Hopkins. My hat goes off to Bernard, who is without question an all-time great.

SHAWN O'DONNELL
Mission, British Columbia

Hold On

Isn't there a rule against excessive holding? Watching Taylor-Hopkins II, all I could think was that Taylor was holding too much. I can't tell you how many times I heard referee Jay Nady say, "You can't hold" or "You can't hold and punch." But he never took a point from Taylor. In any other sport people are penalized for their infractions. Imagine if no penalty came after Peyton Manning's facemask was grabbed four or five times. Things like this make fights boring and take away the allure for the general audience. I expect Taylor to be a boring champion, and hope Winky beats him sooner than later.

SEAN GOODMAN
Syracuse, New York

HBO Under Fire

I have lost all respect for the HBO broadcasting crew, specifically Jim Lampley. Everyone already knows Larry Merchant is biased against Bernard Hopkins, and Harold Lederman is so deluded it's almost comical. However, it's disappointing to hear a man with Lampley's intelligence and class proving to be nothing more than a Taylor cheerleader. Lampley did not broadcast the fight objectively, rather he was hyping Taylor in an attempt to get ratings for HBO in future Taylor fights. No doubt he was influenced by HBO executives, and it's sad that Lampley has to stoop to the level of becoming a shill for the network. If you need evidence of this, all you need to do is re-watch the Hopkins-Taylor II broadcast. You can hear it in the first fight as well. Shame on you, Jim. You seem to have forgotten the first lesson taught to all journalists: objectivity.

GEORGE DePALMA
White Plains, NY

Is THE RING the last voice of integrity in boxing? It sure looks that way. It's no surprise to me that all the people associated with the PPV broadcast of Taylor-Hopkins II were not debating the outcome of the fight. They're all on the HBO payroll, and we know HBO

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

THE RING got lots of mail concerning the second Taylor-Hopkins middleweight championship fight. Among those who wrote to express their indignation over the quality of the fight, the verdict, and HBO's broadcast team were Shawn O'Donnell, Sean Goodman, George DePalma, and Joshua Stark.

didn't want Hopkins to be champion. Well, I've spent my last money on an HBO boxing event and I'm canceling my HBO subscription. This kind of controversy has been a staple of HBO boxing in the biggest fights. Remember how Jim Lampley cheered "we have a brand new champion and he's from the United States" when Lennox Lewis was kayoed by Hasim Rahman? The broadcasting M.O. of HBO is disgusting and so very blatant.

I feel sorry for both Hopkins and Taylor. Hopkins was a good champion regardless of what he did outside the ring—apparently HBO doesn't like strong, vocal black men being in the spotlight—he fought the way a champion should while he was inside it. And Taylor doesn't deserve to be lied to like this. We all know HBO is trying to groom him to be the next De La Hoya and that's why he officially "won" the fight. THE RING called it right on the money in its prediction piece in THE RING DOUBLE (Volume 6, 2005), when Eric Raskin wrote, "If we're using history as our guide, Taylor can be expected to win again, perhaps even more controversially than last time." That's exactly what happened.

JOSHUA STARK
Santa Barbara, CA

Who Cares Who Wins?

With the state that boxing is in today, does it really matter if a fighter loses because of a bad decision? The heavyweight division, the king of boxing's divisions in the past, has fallen to pieces. Floyd Mayweather, today's best, is an arrogant, classless man who doesn't have the drawing power to attract new fans to the sport.

The only thing keeping boxing alive is the fight itself. Whether the fight is good or bad, it's about the fight. The decision at the end really doesn't matter anymore. Case in point: Would it really matter who won the Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward trilogy? Those guys were more exciting in one fight than Mayweather will ever be in his whole career. It's all about the action in the ring, not who gets the decision at the end of the fight.

J.J. GUERRIERI
Cleveland, Ohio

What's So Great About Winky?

About Winky Wright vs. Sam Soliman: What a great fight for Soliman! He gave Winky one hell of a tough time and actually made the fight worth watching. Hopefully, Winky will abandon his quest to fight Jermain Taylor. Wright's performance against Soliman was pathetic. I wonder why people say that Wright is a great boxer? I didn't see anything great about his performance, so what chance does he have against Taylor?

JOSE GUTIERREZ
Irrigon, OR

Don't Reward Cheaters

As the most respected fight publication on this planet, THE RING has always prided itself on being fair and just in its ratings system. Which is why I must challenge your surprise inclusion of Jose Luis Castillo in the junior welter ratings at number five, and his inclusion in the pound-for-pound rankings following his tainted win over Diego Corrales. Castillo has not fought a rated (by THE RING, anyway) fighter at 140. He only fought Corrales at 140 because his training camp was unprofessional in preparing him for this fight. He deliberately came in overweight, yet you have chosen to reward him by rating him above such fighters as Junior Witter, who has campaigned at 140 all of his career.

Castillo should not be in the P-4-P rankings. In my opinion, the second Castillo-Corrales fight should not have taken place. Castillo should have been thrown off the card and the member of his camp who tried to tamper with the scales should be barred from any future weigh-ins. Let's not reward cheats; let's get tough with them!

PAUL WICKES
London, England ■

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Winky Wright covers up as Sam Soliman tries to jab his way inside. Even though Wright won a 12-round decision, Soliman gave him a tough fight, prompting reader Jose Gutierrez to wonder whether Winky is really that great after all.

[Looking Ahead]

By Joe Santoliquito

Rahman-Toney: First Step To Sorting Out A Messy Situation

We may be able to find some semblance of clarity in the mishmash that is today's heavyweight division when **Hasim Rahman** faces **James Toney** at the Atlantic City Convention Center on March 18.

Top Rank secured the rights to the fight, cutting an 11th-hour deal with Toney and co-promoters **Dan Goossen** and **Don King** for a combined purse of around $2.8-million. At press time, Top Rank President **Bob Arum** was attempting to negotiate with HBO to have the fight available for subscription customers of the cable network, rather than show it to a limited audience on pay-per-view. Arum's thinking is that the heavyweight division needs as much attention as it can get, but it was uncertain in late-December whether or not he was able to persuade the powers at HBO to comply.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Toney (above) and Rahman could steer the heavyweight division in a positive direction

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

What is known is that the heavyweight class could be on its way to having a champion again. Rahman is rated number two by THE RING; Toney is number three. Of course, for the winner of Toney-Rahman to claim THE RING title, he would have to then face number-one contender **Chris Byrd**—but first things first.

Let's just hope Rahman and Toney can make it into the ring before they tear each other apart. During the WBC's annual "Night Of Champions" awards banquet in late-December, at the Le Meridien Cancun Resort & Spa, in Cancun, Mexico, a scuffle broke out between the two in the hotel lobby after some verbal jousting. Thankfully, neither fighter was hurt in the altercation.

"I think it's the start of unifying the heavyweight title," said **Bruce Trampler**, Top Rank's chief matchmaker. "The old saying is that as the heavyweight division goes, so goes boxing, and it's a division that hasn't had a dominant force since a prime **Mike Tyson**. The best fighter in the world is supposed to be the heavyweight champion, and we don't have that yet. This fight is certainly the first step. We're basically cherry picking from the **Vitali Klitschko**-Rahman fight.

"This is a fight that might be a little undervalued, and our business is selling and promoting fights, so we looked for what was left after Klitschko-Rahman fell through. [Top Rank Vice President] Todd duBoef has been the one who has really been on top of this from the get-go. Arum and Todd really like Rahman, and if he wins and continues to win, he'll have some value. Arum knows how to promote and they'll make sure the title has more value."

Listen Up

The last time Bob Arum promoted a heavyweight title fight was 1994, when **George Foreman** shocked the world by knocking out **Michael Moorer** in the 10th round to become the oldest heavyweight titlist in boxing history. Arum is hoping that kind of promotional magic spreads itself all over boxing the first quarter of this year, as the Hall of Fame promoter already has the aforementioned Rahman-Toney bout and was finalizing **Floyd Mayweather-Zab Judah** for April 8 in Las Vegas as this magazine went to press. "Top Rank had one of its best years ever in 2005 and the first quarter of 2006, we believe, will be our best quarter of all-time," said Top Rank publicist **Lee Samuels**. That's saying a lot, since Arum started the company in 1966, by promoting, of all things, a heavyweight title fight between world champion **Muhammad Ali** and **George Chuvalo**. It is an ambitious slate for Top Rank, which started with **Erik Morales-Manny Pacquiao II** on January 18, then moves to **Jose Luis Castillo-Diego Corrales III** on February 4, a card featuring **Miguel Cotto** on March 4, and concluding with the big two shows, Rahman-Toney in March and Mayweather-Judah in April. Arum will turn 75 this year, but he shows no signs of slowing down ... February could be a boxing fan's paradise. First on the docket is Castillo-Corrales III, then follows a potpourri of events: *The Contender*'s **Peter Manfredo Jr.** takes a step-up fight against **Scott Pemberton** on ESPN on February 12, and then there's the junior middleweight showdown between **Shane Mosley** and **Fernando Vargas** at the end of the month in Las Vegas ... A fight that can stir some waves in the bantamweight class is on the Mosley-Vargas undercard, when **Jhonny Gonzalez** meets a fading but still-dangerous **Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson**. ■

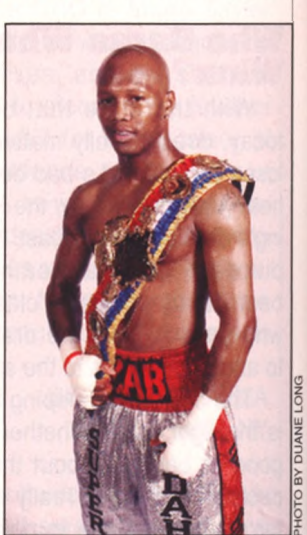


PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

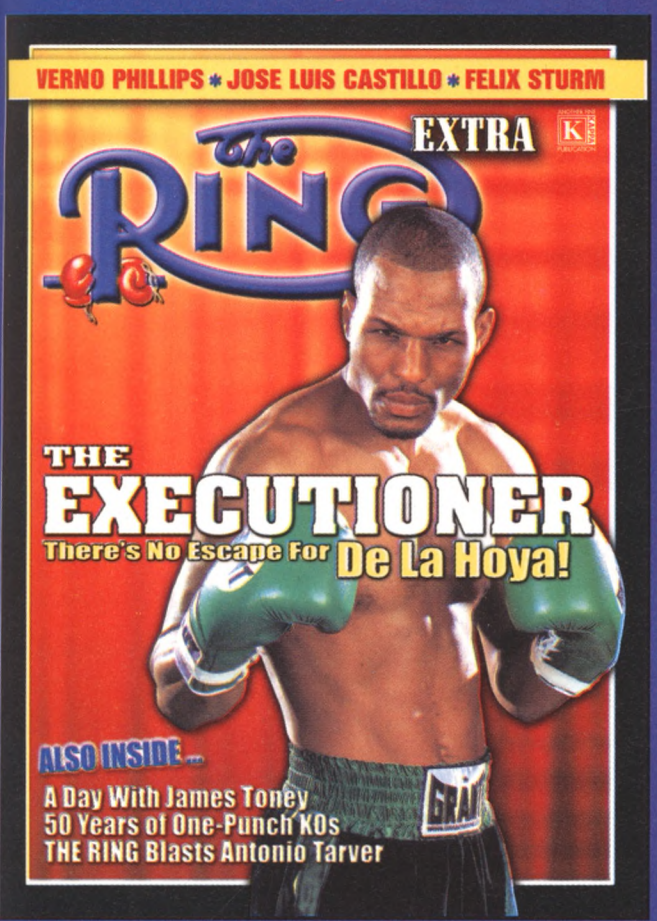
Judah will defend THE RING welterweight belt against Mayweather in April

SUBSCRIBE TO The RING

SAVE MORE THAN $25!

The Undisputed Champion In Three Weight Classes!

Like the sport it has been covering for 83 years, The Ring is now featured in separate weight classes: The Ring, The Ring Extra, and The Ring Double.



You'll see the differences in sizes, but you never see a difference in the standard of excellence "The Bible Of Boxing" established in 1922, and proudly flaunts today.

Send To: **London Publishing Co.**, P.O. Box 2085, Dept. 9, Marion, OH 43306-8185

☐ YES, I would like to take advantage of your money-saving offer. I have indicated below which subscription plan I am ordering and have enclosed my payment or provided my credit card information.

TWO WAYS TO SAVE!

Please Check Off The One You Wish To Order:

1 Save More Than $10 Over Newsstand Price!

☐ The Ring/Extra/Double (7 issues) for $34.20. LRNG

2 Monster Deal—More Than $25 Off Newsstand!

☐ The Ring/Extra/Double (14 issues) for $59.85. LRNG

Please indicate method of payment:

☐ Check or money order
(enclosed and payable to London Publishing Co.)

☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

Card #_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Expiration Date: ___/___
MO/YR

Signature: _____

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____APT.____

CITY_____STATE____ZIP_____

☐ New Subscription ☐ Renewal

FOR CANADA AND ALL OTHER COUNTRIES: $39.80 FOR SEVEN ISSUES ($51.70 AIRMAIL); $71.05 FOR 14 ISSUES ($94.85 AIRMAIL). INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS ONLY IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. PLEASE ALLOW UP TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE YOU RECEIVE YOUR FIRST MAGAZINE. OFFER EXPIRES FEBRUARY 28, 2006.

A0106R

7009

EVERLAST®

Jermain Taylor
Undisputed Middleweight Champ

CALL 1.800.777.0313 or visit **EVERLASTBOXING.COM** for your FREE PROFESSIONA
BOXING EQUIPMENT CATALOG from EVERLAST, a special Double Cover issue featurir
Jermain Taylor and Jeff Lacy.